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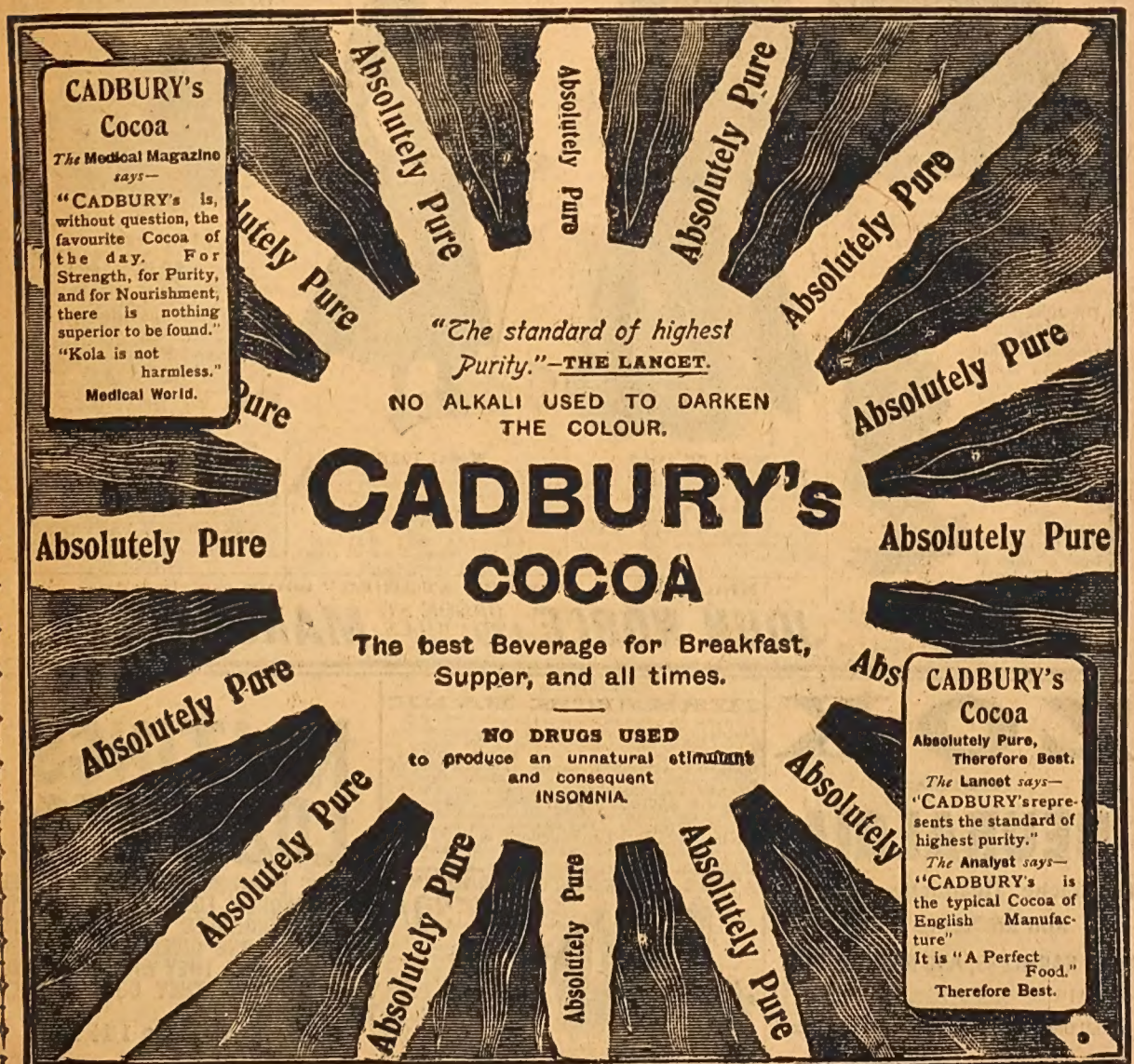
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 516. FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 19TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.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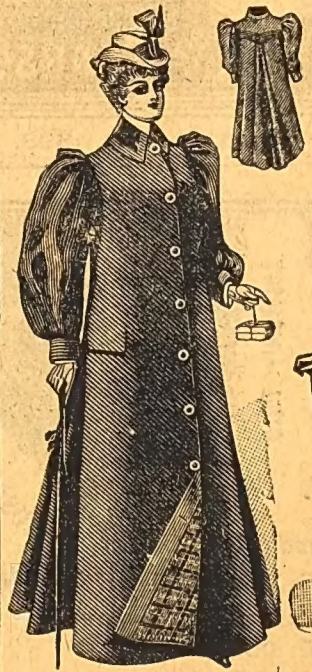

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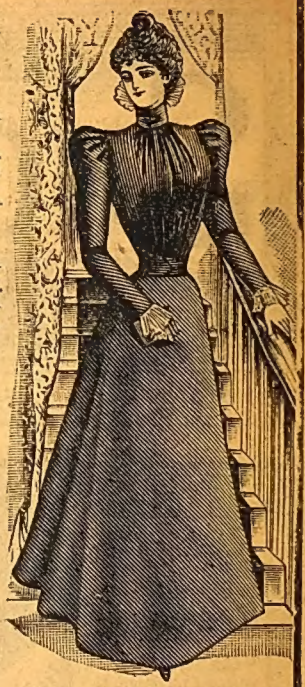

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SHORT STORIES

No. 516. One Penny.

For the Week Ending November 19th, 1898.

The Laughing Princess.

By ARCHIBALD MARSHALL.

I.

THERE was great rejoicing in the kingdom of Rosalia. King Henry had at last found a desirable suitor for the hand of his daughter, the Princess Rosalie. Prince Charming, the eldest son of the King of Salubria, had seen a photograph of the Princess, and promptly fallen in love with her, as well he might, seeing that she was the sweetest and prettiest princess that was ever seen outside a fairy book, or inside it for that matter. So transported with love was he that he had not rested until he had persuaded his father to send an embassy to King Henry, proposing an alliance.

King Henry was delighted with the idea, and had entertained the messengers royally before sending them back to Salubria with a cordial invitation to Prince Charming to come and stay a fortnight and court the Princess himself.

Princess Rosalie had seen Prince Charming's photograph, which he had sent by the messengers, and as he was as beautiful in his way as she in hers, everything seemed to point to the happiest and most satisfactory of marriages. There was nothing to mar the perfect equanimity of all parties interested in the affair, and a speedy termination to Prince Charming's suit would undoubtedly have taken place, if King Henry had only remembered to square the Fairy Malefica.

It was such a pity. He had always managed to keep on good terms with the lady hitherto, although it had been hard work, because she was naturally anxious to pick a quarrel if possible. So far, however, he had given her no chance. She had been the first person to be

Edited By Arthur Pearson

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invited to the christening eighteen years before. She had not wanted to come, of course; she had hoped to have been able to take that opportunity of throwing in a blighting spell. She had half made up her mind to

At the entrance to the hall stood the Fairy Malefica.

make the fact of her not having been asked to stand as godmother the excuse for doing so, but she had let the opportunity go by, thinking that other occasions would probably arise during the childhood of the Princess which she might turn to advantage.

Besides, the Princess had made her appearance on the scene rather before she was expected, and, to tell the truth, Malefica was unprepared with a curse which should do full justice to the occasion and thoroughly keep up her reputation.

Eighteen years had gone by, and as yet she had been given absolutely no opportunity to carry her baleful designs into effect. She was getting rather tired of it. She had been as rude as possible to the King and all the royal family, but they were so afraid of her that they seemed incapable of taking offence.

Presents of game and fruit had poured in upon her. She had been asked to dine at the palace regularly once a week, and no entertainment of any importance had ever taken place without her being invited and treated as the most honoured of all the guests. She had no excuse at all to make herself objectionable, and had bottled up her spite and malice for so long that her powers were beginning to become atrophied with disuse, and she felt that if an opportunity of expressing herself did not arise very soon, she would have to retire from business altogether, and then there would be nothing for her but to go on the parish, for she was improvident, and had laid by nothing out of the handsome income she had made out of her professional engagements.

Prince Charming was to arrive in a fortnight, and preparations to entertain him were going on night and day. The King was so absorbed in these preparations that all thoughts of Malefica, who had been very amiable of late, had gone out of his head. She ought to have been the first person to have been advised of what was to happen, but not a word was said to her; and, worse than all, through a most unfortunate oversight on the part of the Court official who sent out the invitations for the banquet which was to be held in honour of the Prince on the first night of his arrival, *the Fairy Malefica was not invited.*

She could hardly believe her good fortune when it first began to dawn on her that she had been overlooked, and that her opportunity had come at last. Her transports of joy when the time went on and no invitation came so alarmed her cook, who had been with her a great many years, that she thought her mistress was going out of her mind and gave her a month's warning.

Malefica retorted by casting a spell on the cook which would render her permanently distasteful to all policemen, and spent her time in thinking out a thoroughly workmanlike curse which should settle Princess Rosalie once and for all. King Henry, although he was fairly contented himself, had no happier subject throughout his dominions at that time than the Fairy Malefica.

The time went by, and Prince Charming arrived, attended by a numerous retinue, and proved himself to be all that the most exacting father or the most romantic princess could possibly desire. It has been related how the Court of Rosalia was in the habit of arraying itself in all the colours of the rainbow. Prince Charming and his followers had adapted themselves to this custom. The Prince made his appearance at the banquet in a suit of white satin embroidered with gold. Princess Rosalie sat between him and her father, and thought she had never in her life seen anybody so handsome.

Just after they had gone in procession into the banqueting hall, preceded by the minstrels, and had taken their places at the board, King Henry looked round on the glittering assembly and missed the evil face and rusty clothes of the Fairy Malefica. A shiver of apprehension went through him, his ruddy, smiling face became pale and serious.

"I say, Doppelmann," he called out to the Lord Chamberlain, "where's Malefica?"

The Lord Chamberlain cast a hurried glance at the chair which the fairy was accustomed to occupy. It was empty. Then his face went white.

"My liege!" he faltered, "she has not been invited."

"Oh, Rosie, Rosie," groaned the King, "it has come at last. We are undone."

"Why, what's the matter, father?" said the Princess in great surprise, while Prince Charming wondered what on earth the disturbance could be about.

"Here, Doppelmann!" cried the King, rousing himself, "take a royal carriage and go at once to Malefica's house and say you've come to fetch her. Say you forgot to put a stamp on her letter; say anything you like, but for goodness sake keep her in a good temper, or I don't know what will happen."

The Lord Chamberlain hurried off with a scared face, and the King turned to his guest.

"Excuse us, your Royal Highness," he said with an

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attempt at a smile. "An old family friend—it will be all right. Let us cast care to the winds and be merry. Gentlemen, a toast!"

The King rose with his gold cup in his hand and looked down the great hall over the bright array of revellers and retainers. He made a gallant attempt to appear at his ease. He opened his mouth to speak, but his jaw dropped and his hand fell, for there at the entrance to the hall, with the most evil leer on her face, stood the Fairy Malefica.

II.

THE Fairy Malefica was not dressed for company. She had never given in to the Rosalian custom of rigging herself out as if she was a character in a play, but preferred to go about as a respectable German Frau. But on this occasion she had been so excited at the chance that had come to her at last, that she had not even taken the trouble to put on her Sunday clothes. There she stood amongst that glittering throng, her bonnet awry, a loose strand of grey hair falling from under it, and two or three buttons off her gloves, which she had pulled on hastily as she came along. But if her appearance was commonplace, not to say slatternly, there was no doubt about the baleful glare of her eyes as she stood and faced the terrified King and his bewildered guests.

She pointed her finger at him.

There was an instant's dead silence. King Henry was trying to summon up a voice to assure Malefica that they had waited for her half-an-hour, and couldn't make out why she didn't turn up, but the malevolent gleam of her eye and the sneer on her face deprived him of all power of speech, and he could only gulp down in his throat the words that refused to come any further. His own subjects stared in fascinated horror at Prince Charming and his followers in utter bewilderment. Malefica also went on staring as hard as she could. She enjoyed this dumb tribute to her powers and wouldn't have cared how long it lasted. She was so brazen-faced that she could have stared all of them out of countenance.

But the silence was broken by a little silvery peal of laughter that made everybody jump. The only person in the hall who was not in the least upset by the appearance of the bad fairy was Princess Rosalie, and she only saw a very untidy and rather cross old woman for whom she didn't care the snap of her finger.

"Oh, what an old fright!" said the Princess, and laughed again.

A look of rage and malice passed across Malefica's face. She raised her umbrella and pointed at the Princess.

"I'll teach you to laugh at me, miss," she said in an awful voice. "And I'll teach you, Henry, to give a dinner-party without inviting me to it."

She paused and drew herself up in order to give full effect to the terrible curse she was about to launch: but before she could get her words out the Princess laughed again. She seemed to find Malefica very amusing.

"Go away, you silly old woman, and put your bonnet straight," she said. "You're not fit to be seen."

"Aye, foolish jade, laugh away," cried the bad fairy in a sudden access of fury,

"Laugh waking, laugh sleeping,
Laugh drinking, laugh eating,
Laugh when you're merry and laugh when you're sad,
Laugh when you're sorry and laugh when you're glad,
Laugh away, girl, I shan't take off the curse
Till you have laughed yourself dead and into your hearse."

Exception might have been taken to the fairy's speech viewed in the light of poetry, but nobody was inclined to apply criticism to it, for its effect was instantaneous. Peal after peal of hysterical laughter broke from the Princess's rosy lips. She lay back in her chair and laughed so loud and so long that the tears poured down her cheeks.

Malefica rubbed her hands with glee at the success of her curse, and poor King Henry, overtaken by misfortune at last after escaping it so long, sank back into his chair, laid his arms on the table and his head on his arms, and blubbered like a child. The sight would have melted the hardest human heart, but it did not melt the Fairy Malefica's. It seemed to rouse her to yet greater heights of malignity. She pointed towards the poor King, whose fat shoulders were heaving with sobs under his doublet of crimson satin.

"Aye, fool, you may well weep," said the fairy. "I've got a little curse for you, too."

But the King started up and spread out his hands towards her in piteous supplication.

"No, Malefica, no—not another!" he cried. "I've been a good friend to you, you know I have. It was quite a mistake, 'pon my word it was, your not being invited. It was that fool Doppelmann—he's so very careless. I'll sack him—I'll promise you I will—and I'll give you anything you like if you'll only not put a curse upon me, and take off the one you have put on Rosie. For goodness' sake, child, leave off that beastly noise; I can't hear myself speak." For the Princess was still laughing away with all her might as if it was all the best joke in the world. "Take her out!" said the King. He was of a peppery disposition, although kind-hearted, and the Princess was led away by her ladies-in-waiting, still laughing, and already showing signs of exhaustion.

Malefica looked at him thoughtfully.

"I was going to say that you should go on weeping without stopping," she said.

"Weep waking, weep sl——"

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"No, no, not that!" pleaded the poor King, the tears already beginning to trickle down his face, "although I'm sure I shall if you don't take the curse off Rosie.

The Lord Chamberlain told them the news

Think of all I've done for you, Malefica. Show a little gratitude—do now, there's a good woman!"

The fairy paused. Perhaps she was touched by the King's appeal. Perhaps she only thought that if the Princess had to go on laughing without stopping and the King had to go on crying, they would die of exhaustion before long and rob her of half her fun.

"Well, then, I'll alter the curse," she said. "I can't bother to put it into poetry"—"Thank goodness," muttered Prince Charming, who was beginning to find his wits—"but it will act just as well without. You shall weep at everything until you see or hear something so funny that you can't help laughing, and Rosalie shall laugh at everything until somebody succeeds in making her cry. And I don't think either of those two things will happen in a hurry," she added to herself as she made her way out of the hall.

III.

"COME now," said Prince Charming, when Malefica had left the hall. "That's better. We ought to be able to remove the curse pretty easily now. Don't cry, your Majesty. We've got just such another tiresome old woman attached to the Court of Salubria. We always buy her off now; it comes cheaper in the end. There's a certain sum appropriated to that purpose in the estimates every year. Can't you square the old lady?"

"No, there's no chance of that," said King Henry with a fresh burst of tears. "We're done for—up a—boohoo—tree."

"Well, I don't know what a boohoo tree may be," said the Prince. "We don't grow them in Salubria. But don't take on so about it. We'll soon have you laughing fit to break your sides. Look here, did you ever hear that story of the man who went into a shop and——"

"I've heard *all* the stories about men going into shops years ago," said the King, weeping bitterly. "Don't make it harder to bear than it is."

"Oh, all right," said the Prince in a huff. "If you like turning yourself into a running tap, *I* don't mind. You look a jolly big fool sitting there blubbering like a baby, that's all I can say. I shall hook it. I don't like my dinner swimming in salt water."

"Oh, how unkind you are!" wailed the King. "Why was I ever born?"

"Can't think," said the Prince. "I'll have a chop and mashed potatoes served up in my private apartments please, Mullstein," and he left the hall attended by his equerry.

"He's offended already," wept the King when Prince Charming had disappeared. "He might have had a little more consideration for us. I think. I didn't want to hear his beastly stories. Fetch Rosie down, somebody. I shall be under the curse all my life, I know, but I should think the sight of her poor father in this state would be enough to make her cry if anything would."

So Princess Rosalie was brought down again. The King was still sitting at the table sobbing as if his heart would break. Directly the Princess came in and saw him she pointed her finger at him and doubled herself up with laughter.

"Oh, you *do* look so ridiculous, papa," she said, "you funny, fat old thing! Your face is like a damp tomato with puffy little slits for eyes. Oh, dear, dear, take me away, somebody, or I shall die of laughing!"

And the Princess was led upstairs again in uncontrollable merriment, while the poor King was sunk into the most desolate state of grief by the behaviour of his undutiful daughter.

The next day some guests were to arrive at the palace, the two Kings of Dummeleutia, George and Ferdinand, with the Queen and their suite. King George was an American, whose name was really Elijah Pollixenes Jopp, and King Ferdinand had recently married the Lady Anne of Rosalia, King Henry's sister.

"We must do something before they come," said Count Doppelmann, the Lord Chamberlain. "If his Majesty goes on like this we shall be flooded out of the palace, and as for the Princess, it's as bad as living in the Zoo."

So the morning was spent in trying to remove the curses. They told Princess Rosalie that her father was dead. It was rather cruel of them, but she didn't seem to mind a bit. She said they would have the stunningest funeral as ever was, and she would be chief mourner and go in a salmon pink frock. In fact they thought she would have a fit, she was so entertained by the information. Then, as she seemed so pleased at the idea, they told her he wasn't dead at all, and she laughed all the more because of the relief to her feelings. Then her nurse, who had been with her a long time and was a privileged person, suddenly slapped her face, under orders. The Princess didn't cry, but the nurse did, for Rosalie slapped her back so hard that it gave her the toothache, and that, of course, was an excellent joke.

Being very beautiful, Princess Rosalie was rather fond of dress. They took away all her pretty clothes and said that Prince Charming was coming to see her. When she couldn't find anything to put on she said she would receive him in her dressing-gown, and the idea appeared to her so humorous, although her attendants thought it only indelicate, that she went off into another burst of laughter at their shocked faces. Then they

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dressed her and sent for the Prince. He came in with a very grave face, and she laughed at him. He did not like that, for he was rather a vain young man, although very nice if you knew how to treat him.

"You funny little boy," said Princess Rosalie. "What fun we'll have when we're married, won't we?"

She looked so pretty with her smiling face that Prince Charming forgave her instantly.

"Yes," he said, "but I can't live with a laughing jackass, you know."

It was a rude speech—there was something wanting in the Prince's manner, although he was very handsome—but Rosalie thought it only amusing, and showed such appreciation of his wit that he was quite pleased, and made up his mind to repeat the joke to the King to see if it would make him laugh.

"You've got a smut on your nose," said the Princess.

Prince Charming hastily took out his handkerchief, wetted it, and rubbed his nose.

She sat down on a sofa.

"There isn't any black on it," he said, alluding to the handkerchief.

"No, it was a white smut," said the Princess with a shriek of laughter.

"What a beastly stupid joke!" said the Prince sulkily. "I could make a better one than that with my hands tied."

"Did'ums get angry, then?" said the Princess, still laughing at him. She never left off teasing him all through the interview, and he got crosser and crosser.

"Look here, Rosalie," he said at last, "you like me and want to marry me, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said the Princess. "Won't we have larks?"

Prince Charming got up and stood facing her.

"No, we won't," he said slowly, nodding his head at her. "Do you want to know why? Because—I'm—not—going to—marry you—so there!"

And he stalked out of the room with unapproachable dignity, while the Princess lay back on a couch and laughed till her sides ached.

They didn't fare any better with the King. He had the blinds of his bedroom drawn down, and sat there plunged in inconsolable grief. He refused to stir out of that room; he said it was a good enough place to die in, and he knew he was going to die. They brought the Court jester to him. The poor man did his best, but the King ordered him to be beheaded after his second riddle, which was something about a schoolboy and a postage-stamp, and then wept copiously at the thought of what a brute he had been.

Somebody put a bandbox on a chair, and then sent for the Lord Chancellor with instructions to sit down on it. He did so, but the King was not in the least amused. He only said that they were all against him and seemed determined to break up his happy home. They got him out of his bedroom by-and-by, and engaged a travelling company which happened to be in the neighbourhood to perform a Rosalian adaptation of *Charlie's Aunt* before him.

Princess Rosalie laughed all through the performance, which encouraged the actors wonderfully, but the King said that the way they knocked the poor old lady about was one of the most pathetic things he had ever seen in his life.

At last they gave him up as a bad job, and let him mope as he liked until the arrival of Elijah, in whom the whole Court had great confidence, for the fame of his previous exploits had spread all over the country.

IV.

THE Royal party from Dummeleutia arrived in the afternoon. The Lord Chamberlain met them with a long face and told them the news. Ferdinand opened his eyes but said nothing. He was not a man of resource. Queen Anne said she would go and see her niece. "I flatter myself that there is nothing particularly ridiculous about me," she said haughtily. But Princess Rosalie seemed to think otherwise, and drove her aunt out of the room in a huff after about five minutes' conversation. Elijah asked to be taken to see the King, who fell on his neck and implored him to help an afflicted man.

"Cheer up, twenty-stone," said Elijah. "We'll soon put this right for you. What's the lady's address?"

"2, Mahatma Villas," said the King. "Do you think you can really induce her to take off the curse?"

"She'll take it off mighty quick when I've seen her," said Elijah, and he went straight out of the Palace to pay the Fairy Malefica a call.

A spirit of cheerfulness began to diffuse itself round the Palace when it was known that the famous King of Dummeleutia had taken matters in hand, and infected everybody except the lugubrious Monarch of Rosalia.

Elijah sent in his name, and was shown into Malefica's drawing-room, where the bad fairy soon joined him. He was looking at the pictures on the wall when she came in. He turned round towards her, and instantly fell back in pretended amazement.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said, "I want to see the Fairy Malefica."

"I am she," said Malefica, with great dignity.

"Why," exclaimed Elijah, "they told me you were an ugly old woman! You can never believe half you hear."

The fairy's face darkened.

"They dared tell you that!" she exclaimed. Then

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she simpered, "Then I am not quite what you expected, your Majesty?" she said with downcast eyes.

"Well, I should smile," said Elijah. "What they can see in that pink and white Princess when you're along, ma'am, beats me. Will she swallow that, I wonder?" he added to himself in some anxiety. But the digestive powers of Malefica's vanity was ostrich-like in their capacity, and made nothing of assimilating the compliment. She began to think that Elijah was a very agreeable man. She sat down on a sofa, and he sat beside her.

"Capital curse that you worked off on 'em at the Palace," said Elijah.

"Yes, wasn't it?" said Malefica, much gratified. "Oh, they can't play fast and loose with me, and so I'll let 'em know."

"Howdjer do it?" inquired Elijah.

Malefica looked at him.

"You won't tell anybody if I tell you, will you?" she said.

"Me, ma'am?" exclaimed Elijah. "What do *you* think?"

"Well, then, I *will* tell you," said Malefica. She unfastened the top button of her dress and took out a little clear white stone which was suspended from a chain encircling her skinny neck. "When I wear that," she said, "if I tell anybody to do anything they've got to do it."

"Shucks!" said Elijah in some alarm.

"Would you like to kiss my hand?" said Malefica coyly.

"Yes, ma'am," said Elijah boldly, but with some inward shrinking.

"Do it, then," said Malefica, holding out her hand, and Elijah did it. He felt somehow that he had to.

He was considerably surprised, but he was careful not to tell Malefica so.

"That don't amount to much," he said. "Tell me to do something I don't wan't to."

"You like sitting here by me, don't you?" said Malefica.

"Like it!" echoed Elijah. "Why——"

"Go out of the room," said Malefica.

Elijah got up instantly and went towards the door.

"Come back," said Malefica laughing, before he had reached the door. "It works all right, doesn't it?"

"It beats Edison," said Elijah. "Let me have a look at it, ma'am."

"No," said Malefica with great cunning, "I don't let it go out of my hands."

"Then you don't trust me," said Elijah. "Good morning, ma'am," and he got up to go.

"Come back," said Malefica, and Elijah felt there was nothing for it but to obey her.

"Yes, you can make me stop with you;" he said, "but you can't make me want to."

To his surprise the bad fairy burst into tears.

"You've hit it," she cried, rocking herself to and fro. "Everybody's afraid of me, but nobody loves me for myself—boohoo—and—and yet you said I was beautiful—at least I think you did—did you?"

"I implied it ma'am," said Elijah.

"Then why can't you love me for myself?" sobbed Malefica. "I'm worth loving, ain't I?"

"You are, ma'am," said Elijah, "but true love cannot exist without trust."

"If I were to trust you with the stone do you think you could——"

"I'm sure of it, ma'am," said Elijah promptly. "Try me."

"Here, take it, then," said Malefica. "Oh, the weakness of a maiden's heart!"

Elijah pocketed the stone.

"I'll give it you back when we're married," he said.

Malefica hid her face in coy alarm.

"Oh, how fast you go!" she said. "I really don't think I ought to listen to you. When will it be given out?"

"Come to the banquet at the Palace to-night," said Elijah. "Don't wear those rusty old clothes. Princess Rosalie knows how to deck herself out. Dress yourself like her."

"I will," said Malefica with fervour. "If she can stand it, silly chit, surely *I* can."

"'Course you can," said Elijah. "Now I'm off. You don't want me to stop any longer."

"No, no—go," said Malefica. She forgot that Elijah had the stone and was anxious for him to depart, which he immediately did, chuckling to himself as he made his way back to the Palace.

V.

When Elijah got back to the Palace he met Prince Charming mooning about the garden.

"Well, young fellow," said Elijah cheerfully, "how do you find yourself?"

"I am getting tired of it," said Prince Charming. "I shall be off home to-morrow morning."

"What, and leave the Princess!" exclaimed Elijah.

"I don't know that I'm so very keen on the Princess," said Prince Charming. "She's very pretty, of course; but—well, you see how it is, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," said Elijah. "I see you ain't fit to black her boots. Nice sort of a gilded popinjay, *you* are—forsake the poor girl when she's in trouble!"

"Funny sort of trouble," retorted the Prince, "grinning like a Cheshire cat all day long!"

"But she wants to marry you," said Elijah. "Her taste ain't worth two cents in my opinion, but she wants to."

"Do *I* want to marry *her*? That's the question," said Prince Charming.

"No, it ain't the question," said Elijah. "Still it's got something to do with it. And you *do* want to marry her. Do you hear? You want to marry her right now."

"Why, of course I do," said Prince Charming with a sudden access of cheerful energy. "Where's the Archbishop? Let's have a wedding at once."

"You don't mind her laughing, you know," said Elijah, still looking at him keenly.

"Mind it!" exclaimed Prince Charming. "Why, I like it. What a merry home we shall have to be sure."

"Well, you wait till the banquet to-night," said Elijah. "Everything will be put right then. You ain't good enough for her, and that's a fact. Still, if she wants you, that's enough for me, and she shall have what she wants, pretty dear."

Then he went into the Palace. "No doubt about the charm acting," he said to himself.

The hour for the banquet came round. The King was still in the depths of woe and Princess Rosalie laughed at everything and everybody. There was an air of constraint over the whole assembly, and the feast promised to be very unlike the usual hilarious entertainments for which the Palace was notorious. The soup had gone down (King Henry had spoilt his by

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crying into it) and the fish was on the table before the Fairy Malefica made her appearance. She generally came late in order to make an impression.

On this occasion the impression she made was undoubted. She had herself announced by a royal footman, who could hardly get his words out, so astounded was he at her appearance. She stood at the entrance to the hall, her evil face wreathed in smiles, while the company stared at her in undisguised amazement. She had dressed herself exactly like Princess Rosalie. She wore a girlish frock draped with festoons of pink roses. No jewels lightened the arid waste of her skinny neck and arms. She had stuck a red rose in her hair which she had dyed a sort of dusty primrose. Her appearance was enough to make the stoutest heart quail as she stood grinning in the doorway, a grizzly travesty of youthful innocence.

There was a dead silence which was broken by a ringing laugh from the Princess. Malifica's grin changed into her usual malignant scowl as she turned towards her, but much the Princess cared for that. "What a ridiculous creature!" observed Queen Anne of Dummeleutia, and began to laugh, too. Gradually a hum of amusement began to creep all round the hall, which expanded into roars of laughter, and soon the rafters rang again with the boisterous merriment which Malefica's appearance evoked. Only King Henry still sat sunk in Stygian gloom and wept unaffectedly at the miserable spectacle.

But Elijah was whispering at his ear. "Look at the old fool," he said. "Djever see such a sight? Ain't it the funniest thing you ever set eyes on?"

A watery smile gleamed through the King's tears.

"Do you think it is really funny?" he asked hesitatingly.

"Funny!" echoed Elijah. "Why, man, it's great! Go on—let yourself loose. Have a good laugh at her. It'll do you good." And he dug his royal host in the ribs.

King Henry's sorrow took wings and fled for ever. He lay back in his chair and led the chorus which filled the hall, his fat sides shaking like a jelly, his shouts becoming more and more like the crowing of a wheezy cock as his appreciation of the absurd spectacle increased. The curse had been removed, and the joy of his loyal people rose to an indescribable height as they realised that their jolly monarch was himself again.

In the meantime Malefica's rage at the effect her entrance had caused increased beyond all bounds. She gnashed her teeth and rolled her eyes, and if Elijah had not had her charm safe in his pocket, there is no doubt that the whole Court of Rosalia would then and there have been changed into all sorts of disagreeable monsters as a punishment for their temerity. But Malefica was powerless. She made her way on to the dais where Elijah sat, and put her hand on his shoulder.

"You will protect me from their impertinence, won't you, my love?" she said. "Wither them! Blight them! Ugh!"

"No, ma'am," said Elijah calmly. "I've undertaken this contract, and it will be carried out in my own way I don't stand interference."

"Gimme back my stone!" yelled Malefica. "Give it me at once!"

Elijah took no notice of her request.

"Kneel down and beg his Majesty's pardon for the way you've behaved," he said.

The bad fairy did as she was told, and she looked more horrible than ever with the tears of mortification making furrows in her painted cheeks.

"Oh, that's all right," said King Henry. "Let bygones be bygones. Sit down and make yourself comfortable."

By this time everybody had left off laughing and sat watching the development of affairs, all except Princess Rosalie. The joke of Malefica's entrance had not yet ceased to amuse her, and her laugh rang out from the expectant silence.

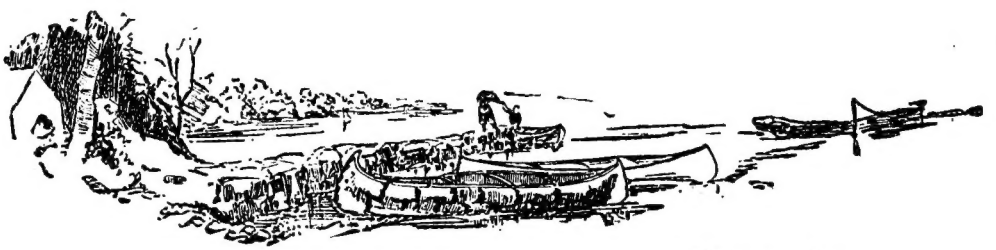
"Here, wait a minute," said the King. "Take off the curse from that poor child first."

"I can't," wailed Malefica. "This cheating, swindling, perjured——"

"Now then," said Elijah, "steady there please, ma'am, and hold your tongue." Then he rose in his place. "*She* can't, Henry, but *I* can," he said. "Here, miss, chuck it! You've laughed enough. The world ain't a bad sort of place, but it ain't so humourous as all that."

All eyes were turned on the Princess. The laughter died slowly out of her face, and she gave a long sigh. "I feel as if I never wanted to smile again," she said. But she did within five minutes when Prince Charming, whose character improved in flavour when things went right with him, embraced her before them all, and asked her to come and reign over the kingdom of Salubria with him, informing her that his father was on his last legs, and it wouldn't be long before they two ascended the throne.

The Prince and Princess were married with great pomp a week later, and are very happy. Malefica is a reformed character, and earns an honest living by telling fortunes at charity bazaars. She still thinks Elijah behaved badly to her, as perhaps he did; but that great man is quite unruffled by the charge, and still retains possession of the charm, which is of great use to him. King Henry is once more his old, merry self, and eats and drinks more than ever.



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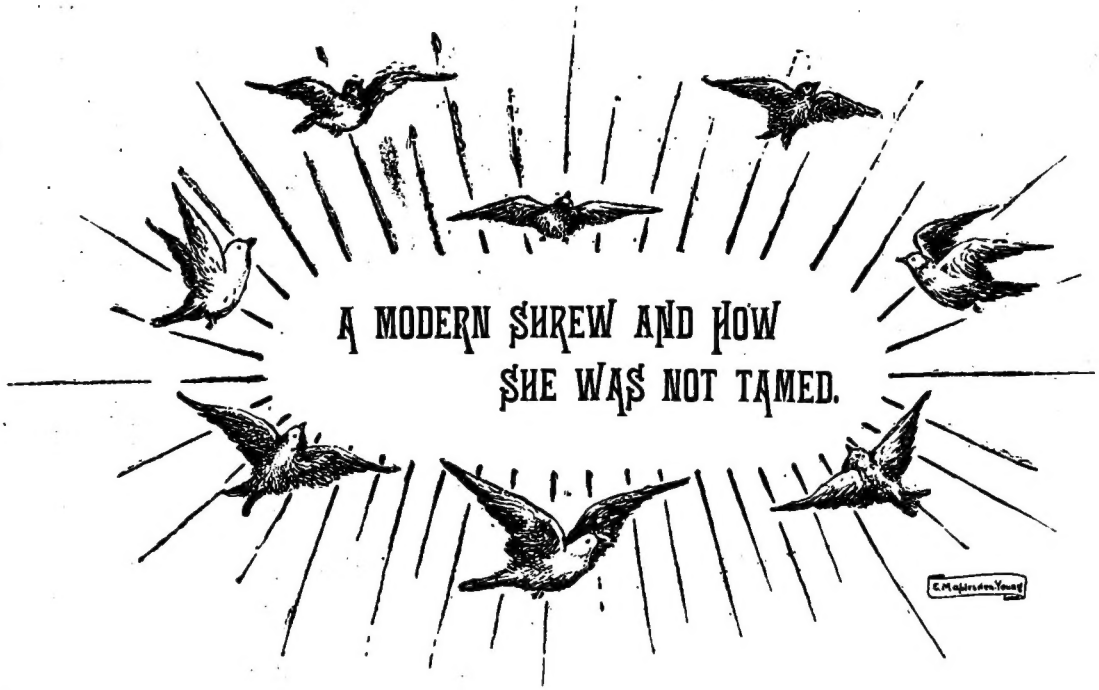

I REMEMBERED him passing backwards and forwards between his room and chapel at college. There was the same serious, injured look, a look in which, to those who knew him best, who understood his eccentric views and absurd methods, there was something comical.

He had been devoted to the stage. When a new company came to Cambridge he would be found among its audiences from the first to the last. He would rather see a bad play than no play at all; and when he was not at the theatre he read plays.

Notwithstanding his peculiarities, all of his set loved him. He was kind-hearted, impulsive, generous. His face was a mirror for his feelings, and no one saw it reflect aught except what was genuine. This was the man I had parted from five years before.

Now he was a new man—a new man—and yet the same old Peter Brown. He was married. He had just entertained me at dinner. The wife, a decided-looking little woman, sat at the board, plainly its mistress. There was no wine, and when we left the table we left it altogether and without a suspicion of the odour of tobacco.

We had chatted perhaps half-an-hour in the drawing-room, when Peter rose and signalling me to follow him, led the way up three flights of stairs to a little chamber with one window. All the furniture it contained were two easy chairs, a table, and a cupboard hanging against the wall. The door closed, Peter drew a long sigh. Then he went to the cupboard and took out a bottle, some glasses, and a box of cigars.

"Come, Peter," I said, lighting a weed he gave me, and throwing myself back on the cushions, "tell me all about it."

"About what?"

"I see that conviviality is restricted in your house. I am curious to know why."

His expression was very sad.

"Madam objects?" I queried.

"Madam objects." He cast a rueful glance round the apartment.

"And, like a good husband, you submit."

"Yes, I submit."

"And gracefully?"

There was some hesitation.

"My submission was not exactly graceful originally."

"Well, tell me about it."

He lit his cigar and began to relate an attempt which for originality and ingenuity had never been equalled by any of his extremely remarkable freaks while in college.

"You remember how fond I used to be of the theatre? Well, I've got over that, but it took a terrible experience to cure me. Of all the plays ever put on the stage my favourite used to be *The Taming of the Shrew*. To me Petruchio's method of curing his wife's temper, by feigning to be more violent than she, was a model of cleverness; and before I was old enough to have a wife I vowed that, if she should be a shrew, I would be a Petruchio.

"I first met my wife at a tennis party. She was my partner, and looked very pretty in a loose tennis jacket, a striped skirt, and a jaunty cap.

"With me it was one of those cases when a man's heart flies out of his bosom like a tennis-ball from a racket, and lights on the girl. We played very well together, and were neck and neck with our opponents near the end of a game, when a fault was served to my partner, which she sent back.

"'That's a fault!' I exclaimed.

"'What do you mean?' she asked sharply.

"'It fell out of the court.'

"'No such thing.'

"'I beg pardon,' I replied politely; 'it looked so to me.'

"'I'll be obliged if you'll play your own game, and let me play mine,' she returned angrily.

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"'I beg pardon,' I said apologetically, and the game went on.

"There was something about the bare-faced assurance and dictatorial manner of the proceeding that attracted my attention. Somehow I became dazzled by the girl's angry eyes. I could see nothing but a pretty face, a petite figure, a striped skirt, and a jaunty cap. I went away from the tennis party with the little termagant buzzing about my thoughts like a bumble-bee among the hollyhocks.

"I secured an introduction to her father's house; quarrelled with her at my first call; made it up on the second by retracting everything I had said; found myself cut by her a few days later; apologised for something I had not done; tried in every way I could think of to please her, and finally found myself madly in love with a girl who promised, if I should win her, to make my life a pandemonium.

"I went on a trip, to be gone a month, to try and forget her, but returned in a week thoroughly convinced that I couldn't get on without her. I proposed. She would probably have refused me had not her father told her that he wouldn't have a man for a son-in-law who 'languished under such a theatrical drawl.' That settled it. I was accepted.

"There was now nothing for me but a life of misery with a stubborn, quarrelsome woman. No man could live in peace with her unless he could break her. But could I do this? I thought of Petruchio, and sat down and read over *The Taming of the Shrew* for the hundredth time. I noticed that Petruchio first got the lady into his power and then commenced his training, I resolved to be married at once.

"The next day I went to my lady-love and told her that owing to business engagements which would require my absence, it would be impossible for me to claim her within a year. She informed me that unless I could find it convenient to claim her the next week I could look elsewhere for a partner. I had scored one point. I accepted the terms, and we were married.

"We went through the honeymoon pleasantly, for I determined not to cross her in anything, waiting till we should be comfortably settled at home in the house her father had given her in the same street in which he lived and only a few yards away. Then I proposed to commence a modern instance of the taming of the shrew.

"The honeymoon ended, and we arrived at home. I had engaged the cook myself, and by promising a large reward, had secured her to my plan. It was understood that she was not to give my wife food without my permission. I didn't rely much on this part of the programme—to starve her into submission—but I thought I'd try it with the others.

"We sat down to our first dinner at home. My wife sat opposite me, looking so pretty, so exceptionally good-natured, that my heart almost failed me. After all, wouldn't it be better to wait until she should provoke me?

"No, I had laid the plan, and I would carry it out. All our future depended upon it. The servant placed before me a smoking joint. I took up the carving knife and sharpened it on the steel savagely. My heart beat like a kettle-drum. Somehow it struck me that I was about to make a fool of myself; but I thought again of all that was at stake and began my training.

"'Jane,' I burst out, addressing the servant, 'what's the matter with this meat?'

"'Nothing, sir, that I know of,' Jane answered, opening her eyes.

"'The meat is burnt,' I exclaimed, feigning anger which I didn't feel. 'Take it away.'

"To say that my wife was astonished wouldn't alone indicate her feelings or her appearance. She turned deadly pale.

"'Take it away,' I repeated.

"By this time my wife had partially recovered her equanimity. I expected every moment to feel the decoration of fragmentary glass about my brow. I was disappointed.

"'Take it away, Jane,' she said in a soft voice.

"I was delighted. It was plain she had seen an evidence of will-power that she daren't oppose. With difficulty controlling my agitation, I rose from the table. My wife followed me into the drawing room. I passed on into the hall, and, taking my hat and stick, turned towards her and said:

"'I am going out. I will return at eight. We will then keep our engagement at your father's.'

"She stood looking at me; her face betokening alternative wonder and amusement with an occasional shade of anxiety. Then there came a sudden spasmodic little laugh, followed by as sudden a flash of lightning in the eye. Had I delayed a moment the storm would have burst. But I didn't delay. I went out and shut the door after me.

"I went directly to my club. Taking my old seat in the dining room I ordered a good dinner and a bottle of wine. I felt that thus far all had gone as well as could be expected. The ball was opened. My wife was at home, and no dinner. I was at the club with plenty to eat and a bottle of excellent Margaux.

"By the time I had drained the last glass I felt quite equal to the remainer of the ordeal before me, and resolved firmly not to depart one iota from my model Petruchio. Having finished my dinner and tossed off a glass of brandy to put a capper on my courage, I returned to my work.

"I was surprised to find my wife quite calm. She was ready to go with me to her father's. She quietly took my arm, and we walked slowly up the street. The full moon, rising, stood in the east, large and round.

"'How large the moon looks!' she remarked. 'It is full to-night, I think.'

"'The moon?'

"'Yes, the moon. I said the moon.'

"'It's the sun. The moon never shines at this time of day.'

"'Oh—is it?' Her tone didn't imply conviction.

"'I tell you that's the sun,' I blustered. 'Do you mean to contradict me?'

"There was an ominous pause.

"'Oh, no; I wouldn't think of contradicting such an astronomical prodigy. Of course it's the sun.'

"Her tone made me shudder.

"'Then I say it's the moon.'

"'Do you? I knew when I married you that you weren't clever, but I supposed you could at least tell the sun from the moon.'

"The conversation terminated at this point. I was not getting on, and was glad when, a few moments later we reached her father's house. We were received with open arms of course.

"'How well you both look!' and 'Do you find everything comfortable at home?' and 'Was the dinner nicely served?' 'You must be like two kittens on a feather pillow.'

"I think this last remark, made by Mrs. Brown's little brother contained a trace of irony.

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"Two cats, I thought.

"No sooner were their greetings over, and we had kissed and been kissed all round, when my wife and her mother disappeared.

"'What's that?' I asked myself.

"From the dining-room, separated from where we were only by a door, I heard my wife's voice mingling with the clatter of dishes.

"I leaned back in my chair, a trifle discouraged. The starvation part of my plan was surely a failure. But then I hadn't counted much on that.

"Mrs. Brown spent the whole evening in the dining-room, and then sent me word that she would remain all night with her mother. This was an avenue that I had not thought of. I winced. There was nothing for me to do but go home alone. I did so and went to bed—less hopeful than I had been since the commencement of hostilities.

"The next evening, when I returned from business, I found my wife at home and in the hands of a dressmaker. She had been provided with an elaborate trousseau; but one dress, designed to be worn on her reception days, had been left unfinished. She was standing before the mirror in the gown, the skirt of which the dressmaker was arranging to hand more evenly. I advanced and took the fabric between my thumb and finger.

"'What rotten stuff is this?' I asked.

"'It's silk, sir,' faltered the dressmaker.

"'Silk? This silk?'

"'Costly silk, sir.'

"'It's a base imitation. A mixture of poor silk and cotton. And this?'

"'Lace, sir.'

"'Do you tell me this is lace? My wife shall wear no such stuff. She must be dressed as becomes her matchless beauty.'

"My wife stood staring at me in mute wonder. Was it fear or anger that first blanched her cheek, and then flushed it hot as fire? I shuddered at the first word she would speak. But it was not spoken. Beckoning to the dressmaker to follow her, she strode out of the room, and passing into the adjoining chamber locked the door.

"I descended to the dining room. It was dinner time and I was very hungry. I waited for an hour for my wife to come down and dine. I waited in vain. At last I resolved to dine alone.

"'Get me a bottle of wine, Jane,' I said to the maid.

"'Madam has it under lock and key, sir.'

"I took my hat and went to the club and dined there. I sat alone at my table thinking over the situation.

"I went home at twelve, midnight. I was tired and sleepy, but purposely delayed so that my wife might have time to think—to arrive at the conclusion that she must sooner or later come to me vanquished and beg for terms. Then I proposed to take her to my arms, explain my strange conduct, and bid her be a dutiful wife, whereupon all such evidence of my displeasure would be avoided in future.

"When I went upstairs I found our bedroom door locked and bolted. I had especially arranged it myself for safety against burglars, and knew I couldn't force it. I must either beg to be let in or stay out. The former would be fatal; the latter I did. I went to another room, it was locked. I tried another and another; all were locked.

"I aroused the servants and demanded the keys. They were all in madam's possession. I went into the library. I had turned out the lights when I went up, and it was pitchy dark; I stumbled over the coal-skuttle and fell, striking my head on a sharp corner of the mantel-piece. Throwing myself on a sofa, I caught the flow of blood in my handkerchief. I lay awake all night and fell asleep after daylight.

"I was awakened by my wife in the morning opening the library windows. I saw the bloody handkerchief lying on the floor, and caught it up in time to prevent her seeing it.

"'Did you rest well, my dear?' she asked.

"There was a modulation in her voice I dreaded more than harshness. It maddened me. I was really angry now, and it required no acting to play my part. Without noticing her I arose and went upstairs to make my toilet. Then I passed down and out of the house to get my breakfast at the club.

"As I sat eating my chop and sipping my coffee, I made up my mind that before the day was over I must either conquer or be conquered. When I went home to dinner I resolved to take advantage of any excuse to be violent, and be as violent as possible. As I opened the front door with my latch-key I saw my wife standing in the parlour. She had been out, and had not yet removed her hat and gloves. I remembered Petruchio's attack on his wife's cap. Here was my chance.

"'What have you got on your head?' I asked harshly.

"'My bonnet, dear.'

"'It doesn't become you.'

"I confidently hoped that, to avert the storm she must see was brewing she would at least take off the obnoxious hat and lay it on the table. She did no such thing, but stood regarding me with the same mute wonder as during my former efforts.

"Again and again I demanded the hat's removal, but received nothing in reply but a cold stare. At last, giving away to all the violence I felt, and a good deal I did not feel, I raised my stick, and, sweeping it sideways, laid the hat, a mass of velvet and feathers, without form and void, at the other end of the room.

"What followed was so unexpected, so singular that I never could distinctly remember how it occurred. At any rate, at a call from my wife, two men entered from another room and seized me by the arms. One was my brother, and the other my wife's cousin.

"'What does this mean?' I asked, dumfounded.

"'Take him to the next third storey back room,' my wife said calmly to my captors. 'We will keep him there until we know how the disease turns. If he isn't better to-morrow we shall have to send him to the asylum.'

"Heavens! She thought I was insane.

"'My dear!' I cried.

"'My dear, you don't mean—Arthur—Tom——'

"'Don't mind what he says, he's not responsible.'

"By this time I was at the first landing, I struggled; but it was of no avail. My captors were both strong men, and they carried me to the third storey.

"'Go in there,' said one of them, pushing me into the room, from which every article of furniture had been removed. 'You can't hurt yourself there. Stop, let me search you.'

"He took my pocket knife to make sure I could do myself no injury with it; and then shut the door and locked it from the outside.

"Locked up for a lunatic in my own house and by my own bride!

"I passed three hours in a state of intense mortification and disappointment, and three hours more in des-

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pondency and repentance. I began to get hungry Nothing since lunch and it was now 11 p.m. I peeped through the keyhole and saw my wife's cousin guarding me.

"'I want something to eat,' I called.

"'No orders for it,' he replied.

"Great heavens! was my wife going to starve me? I ran over my conduct towards her since we had returned from our wedding trip, and remembered with horror my efforts to starve her.

"It took me just one hour more under the reducing influence of an empty stomach to make up my mind to capitulate.

"'Call Mrs. Brown,' I called to my keeper. I heard him pass the word to the waiting maid below.

"A light step was on the staircase, a quiet, but determined voice to the attendant, 'You may go now, Arthur; much obliged.' Then the same voice to me:

"'What is it dear?'

"'I haven't been ill.'

"'You seem more rational. I do hope you won't have another attack.'

"'Come, come,' I said, trying to assume a trifle of unconcern. 'Let's have no more fooling.'

"'I am not quite sure it would be safe to release you yet.'

"'I want to ask you,' she continued presently, 'if you are convinced of the folly of your proceedings?'

"'Well—yes. I think I can say that I am, rather!'

"'And you won't do so any more?'

"'Not during my present happy alliance with you.'

"'That's very sweet of you. And you'll attend to your business and let me manage the house?'

"'Yes.'

"'Now promise me three things.'

"'What are they?'

"'First to go with me to church regularly.'

"I groaned. 'I promise.'

"'Second no wine on our table ever.'

"'I promise.'

"'Third, no smoking below the third storey.'

"'Thank heaven, that's three. I promise.'

"'Now, my dear, if I let you out, will you be good and not do so any more?'

"'Open the door, I've had enough of this nonsense.'

"She turned the key. I stepped out and she threw her arms about my neck and covered my face with kisses. That was the end of my playing Petruchio."

"Peter," I asked, after we had finished, "is this the room of your confinement?"

"Yes, it was stipulated at the time that I was afterwards to be free only here."

"Your effort was not very wise."

"Not wise?" he asked, much hurt at the remark. "Then what has the world for two centuries seen in *The Taming of the Shrew* to admire? Was Petruchio a fool?"

"I give it up."

A BRUTAL young man is one who would tell a girl who offers to mend his gloves that there is a hole in her father's coat.

HE: "No matter how good a man's head is, it is only good when on his own shoulders."

She: "Ladies who have had some men's heads on their shoulders think differently."

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 4.

THREE of the people whose names were selected have applied for the sovereign. They are:

R. WELLS, High Street, Uppingham.

Mrs. MAY MONTMORENCY, 31 Camden Hill Road, Upper Norwood, S.E.

Staff-Sergeant ALFRED JENKINS, Army Pay Corps, The Barracks, Cardiff.

The following would have received a sovereign each had they applied:

T. V. Dickens, 16 New Street, Daventry; T. Ainsworth, 10 Raglan Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Thomas Young, 7 Brook Street, Kingston-on-Thames; Mrs. Reid, Roosmore Villas, Stanwell Road Swinton, Manchester; Mrs. Barrington, Kirk Langley, Derby; George Yates, 15 Wilson Street, Bury; A. Day, 57 East Street, Horsham; Mrs. Evans, 5 Florence Terrace, Falmouth; Miss Adams, 1 Camden Gardens, Shepherd's Bush; Mrs. Nuttall, 94 Arkwright Street, Bolton; Mrs. Pierpoint, 5 Palmyra Square, Warrington; Mrs. W. E. Battie, 79 Spring Street, Darlington Street East, Wigan; Mrs. Oldfield, The Elms, Yorkshire Street, Rochdale; B. Croft, St. Margaret's Bury, Ware, Herts; Geo. Jenkins, Dafen House, Dafen, Lanelly, South Wales; Miss Wyatt, Stokeleigh, Roehampton Lane, Roehampton; Mrs. Oddy, 3 Theatre Street, Norwich; Mrs. Leitch, Castle Street, Broughty Ferry; C. Ashleigh Wright, Queen's Road, Norbiton; A. Thurston (Grocer), Old Felixtowe; W. Rees, 16 Alexandra Road, Broadstairs; John Naseby, 42 Wansbeck Road, West Hartlepool; Rev. H. R. Jennings, 9 Strangways Terrace, Truro; R. Keddy, 94 Milbourne Street, Carlisle; D. Laird, 66 Ann Street, Dundee; Mrs. Miller, St. Thomas Road, Launceston; A. Nicholas, 26 Harrison Place, Newcastle-on-Tyne; E. G. Snow, 53 Western Road, Brighton; Jos. Turner, 104 Denmark Road, Lowestoft; C. W. J. Bartlett, 27 Springfield Road, St. James, Exeter; J. Ferguson, 7 Tulloch's Buildings, Inverness; Mrs. Dance, 5 St. Mark's Street, Peterborough; S. Cottle, Clandowns Broadway, near Bath; J. C. King, R. I. Constabulary, Maryborough, Queen's County; Miss Low, 10 Airlie Terrace, Perth Road, Dundee; Miss E. Malone, Lissadale. Sligo, Ireland; Geo. Pool, 61 Ashley Street, Carlisle; Chas Rix, 33 Valinger's Road, Lynn; Sam Stork, 47 Eldon Street, Sunderland; F. Masson, 44 Oakfield Street, Altrincham; J. Parker, 23 Castle Crescent, Kendal; Harvey Smith, 52 Vincent Parade, Balsall Heath, Birmingham; Chas. Porter, Lynn Road, Ely; O. H. Sharrott, Chestnut House, Tamworth; Mrs. Emma Cartledge, 120 Blandford Street, Ashton-under-Lyne; Mrs. Eyre, 43 Castle Road, Bedford.

MR. JONES, YOUR EAR!

IN the distribution which finishes on November 28th the Editor proposes to select twenty-five names from the great Jones family, and to set aside for each of them a bright new sovereign. Therefore, good Mr. Jones, tell your friends of the same name what the Editor proposes to do in this matter, and tell them to send along their post-cards some time between Tuesday, November 22nd and Monday, November 28th.

£50 For Mothers, Daughters, Sisters, Cousins, and Nieces!

THE Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* is offering £50 to ladies only, in the Great Distribution Scheme instituted by that paper. He has selected the names of ten ladies, written them on envelopes, and inclosed in each envelope a £5 note, which he will forward to the fortunate persons *on application only!*

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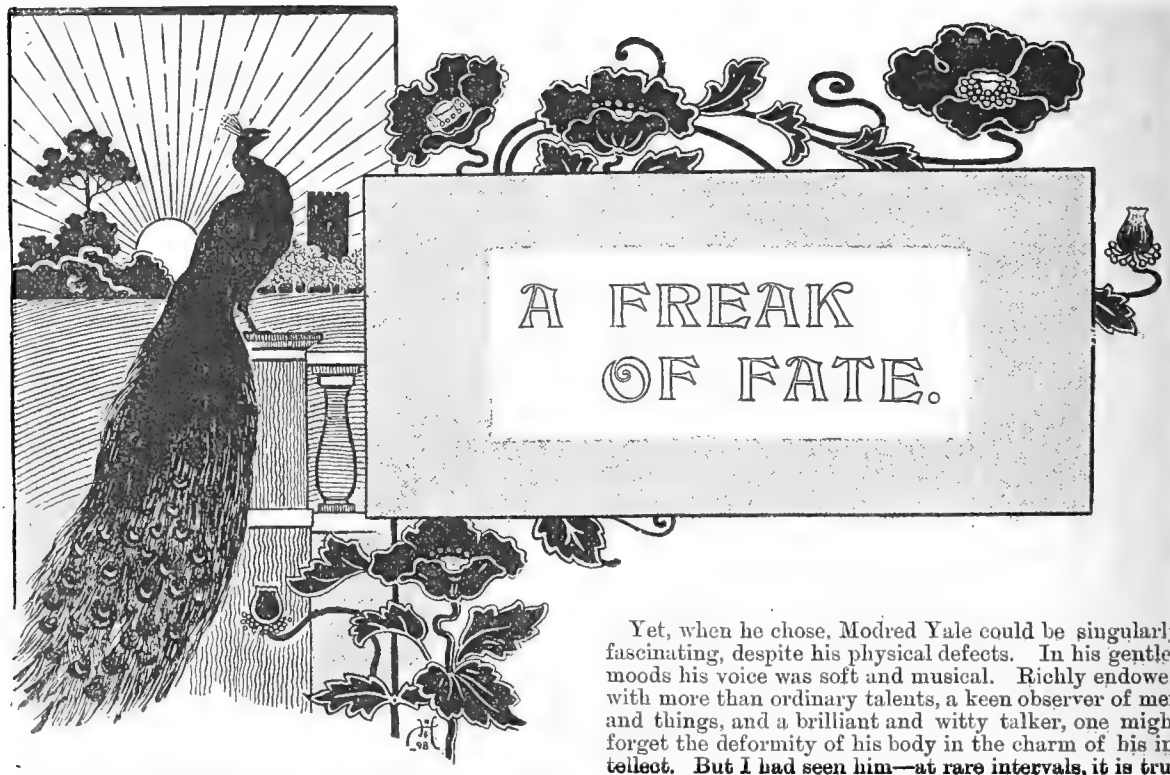

"He has made me a formal proposal for your hand, Cecile."

"But I cannot be his wife, father. I dread and dislike him."

"Listen, Cecile," said my father, and as he raised his head from his hand I saw how pale and haggard his face had grown since the receipt of the letter which lay upon the table before him. "Hitherto I have kept the truth from you; but it is necessary that you should know it now. You believe we are rich. In reality we are beggars. Not an acre of this estate is ours. This house and all in it belongs to another—Modred Yale."

"But how?" I asked, with a growing sense of terror.

"I do not know," answered my father helplessly. "I needed money, and he lent me it. I gave him mortgages. They brought me papers to sign, and I signed them. I am no man of business, Cecile. I don't know how it all came about. But everything is his, and at a word he could turn us out, homeless and penniless."

"And would he have the heart?" I exclaimed angrily.

"We have no claim upon him, Cecile," said my father, "unless you become his wife."

I remembered Modred Yale perfectly, though I was but a mere child when he went away to travel in the East. I had always shrunk from him with an instinctive repugnance; for he had seemed to my fancy something uncanny—not a man, but a gnome. With a face whose pale, cold beauty was marred by an habitual sneer, his body was deformed almost out of semblance to humanity. He was a dwarf with twisted limbs and hunched shoulders, and arms of enormous power, hanging almost to the ground as he walked.

Yet, when he chose, Modred Yale could be singularly fascinating, despite his physical defects. In his gentler moods his voice was soft and musical. Richly endowed with more than ordinary talents, a keen observer of men and things, and a brilliant and witty talker, one might forget the deformity of his body in the charm of his intellect. But I had seen him—at rare intervals, it is true—when it seemed as if the very spirit of evil had taken possession of him; when his voice rose to a harsh scream, and his face darkened with the rage and malice of a demon. This was the man who demanded my hand in marriage.

"He will be here to-night or to-morrow," said my father, looking at me anxiously.

I arose and went out. I was sick and trembling in every limb, and I wished to be alone, to think—to seek some means of escape from the fate which seemed impending over me. Modred Yale's wife! As I went slowly along the quiet lane under the cool shadow of the old oaks, the thought grew more and more incredible and abhorrent, like a nightmare of which one is half conscious, yet which will not be thrown off.

"Cecile!"

I turned with a glad cry; and the load seemed lifted from my heart as I saw the handsome, boyish face gazing at me over the stile, with that look in the frank, blue eyes which I knew so well.

"Sylvan!" I exclaimed. "Oh, I am so miserable!" and I rested my forehead on the fence between us and burst into tears. He sprang over the stile and stood beside me.

"What is it, Cecile?" he said, taking my hand. "What has happened?"

I related the interview which I had just had with my father. As I went on his face darkened with an expression of anger and alarm.

"But this cannot, shall not be," he exclaimed impulsively. "I have never spoken before, Cecile, because I believed you were rich. But now I have a right to, Cecile." His voice grew very low and tender. "I love you, and I have often hoped that you returned my love. Is it so, dear?"

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"Yes," I answered, forgetting all reserve in the sweetness of the moment; "I love you, Sylvan."

"Then I will work for you and your father, and you may defy this man to do his worst!"

"A very pretty scene," croaked a harsh voice near at hand. "Quite idyllic."

We started away from each other and looked round. There, at the distance of a few feet, gazing at us with a mocking leer that distorted his features into a repulsive mask, stood a dwarfish figure that I recognised but too well. It was Modred Yale.

At his side was another shape, hardly more hideous than himself. It was that of a huge ape, almost as tall as his master. By the wicked gleam of his red eyes and the grin that displayed his yellow fangs, the brute seemed to understand and share the dwarf's malicious humour.

With a low bow which the ape imitated—as he did all his master's movements—Modred Yale drew nearer, and, speaking in the same harsh, mocking tone, said:

"If I were an artist now, I should consider myself fortunate in having chanced upon so picturesque a group, and should lose no time in transferring it to canvas. But, pardon me, I am addressing Miss Cecile Ayre, I presume?"

I bowed silently, for I was unable to speak at the moment.

"I am Modred Yale," he resumed, with the same exaggerated air, "whom you remember, of course. But you have forgotten to introduce me to your friend."

"Mr. Sylvan Gainford, a neighbour," I stammered.

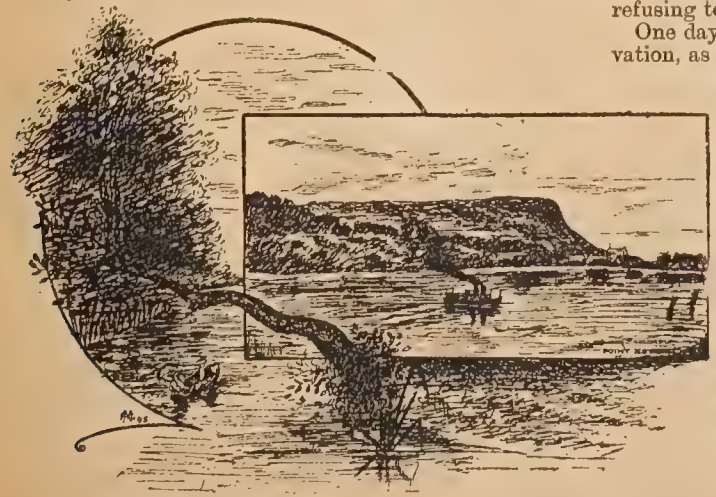
He returned Sylvan's distant acknowledgment with a salutation that was almost insolent in its grotesque extravagance.

"I must not forget my friend, my constant companion and adviser, Gordon," he said. "Come here, you brute, and make your bow."

He struck the animal a violent blow with the stick he carried, as he spoke. With a grin of ferocious hatred at his master, the ape shambled up and ducked his head at us. I was so full of vague terror that the scene had no humour for me.

"And now," added the dwarf insinuatingly, "my dear young lady, will you graciously conduct me to your good father? Mr. Gainford will, I am sure, be kind enough to excuse us.'

Was there something of the master in his tone already?



I thought there was, and so did Sylvan; for I saw his cheek redden and his hand clench.

Fearing an altercation I bade him a hasty good-bye, promising to see him soon again, and joined Modred Yale.

I hardly know how to describe the days that followed, so full of strange terror and suffering were they. With Modred Yale's advent there was an immediate change in our hitherto peaceful household. Almost from the first he assumed an air of authority, all the more repugnant from the mocking politeness with which he treated my father and myself.

My father seemed completely cowed. He rarely spoke in the presence of the dwarf, and when he did, it was with a timidity and hesitancy that were painful to see.

But the strangest and most terrifying thing was the mysterious relation that seemed to subsist between Modred and the ape Gordon. The two were never separated for a moment during the day, and at night the animal slept on a lounge in his master's room. Whenever Modred was out of doors or in, there also was the ape, chattering and grinning.

He insisted that the animal should sit at table with us, which it did, despite my indignant protest, Modred affirming, with his usual mock suavity, that Gordon was a perfect gentleman in manners, and should receive due courtesy.

So the hideous creature had its place beside the dwarf, devouring its food with a grotesque imitation of his master's movements.

Strange to say, the two appeared to hate each other with a savage malignity. Without the slightest visible reason Modred would beat the animal with the stick he always carried twenty times a day. On his part, Gordon would grin and glare at the dwarf with a ferocity that sent a chill through my blood.

Since Modred's arrival he had not spoken openly of his intention of marrying me; though I was convinced that he was only biding his time, perhaps the more effectually to strengthen his hold upon my poor father and myself. I had seen Sylvan but two or three times in the interval. Without appearing to do so, Modred had maintained a close watch over my movements. I could not leave the house for any purpose, but the dwarf, accompanied by his ugly companion, would be at my side, politely insisting upon escorting me in my walk, and refusing to be shaken off.

One day, however, I had managed to elude his observation, as I supposed, and, hurrying down the lane, met Sylvan at the stile. We had hardly shaken hands, however, when we were startled by the voice of my persecutor, who, with his grim companion, had stolen upon us unperceived.

"How deeply I regret the necessity of interrupting this interesting interview," he said, with a smile that was like an unspoken insult, "but I am compelled to warn my young friends that it is contrary to custom for a lady who is about to become the wife of one man to hold secret interviews with another."

"What do you mean?" responded Sylvan haughtily, while I held my breath in dismayed expectancy.

"Merely, my dear young gentleman," said the dwarf suavely, "that Miss Cecile will shortly honour me with her hand. Don't apologise, I beg," he added, with a wave of

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his hand. "You were not aware of it, of course, hence there is no offence. I simply wish to call your attention to the fact."

"It is a lie," returned Sylvan hotly. "Marry you! She would sooner marry your ape. He is less hideous than you in her eyes."

For an instant the dwarf gazed at him with an expression that froze my blood; then he turned to me with his unvarying smile.

"I will accompany you home, my dear Cecile."

"No," I replied, my anger getting the better of my terror. "You have no right to control my actions. You are nothing whatever to me. My father owes you money which he cannot pay, and you may turn us out into the world without bread or a roof to shelter us, if you will. But I will never marry you."

"Do not lose your temper, dear child," he said imperturbably. "If our friend will excuse us, as we walk home together, I think I can convince you that I have spoken the truth."

There was something so sinister in his tone and smile that I yielded, and, bidding Sylvan a trembling adieu, went with Modred and his hated ape.

"You spoke," said he, as we proceeded, "of your father owing me money, intimating that therein lay my power to force you to marry me. That would be, indeed, a power which you might easily defy. But what if it were in my power to send your father to prison for a term of years?"

I started and looked at him in horror.

"My father—in prison?"

"Yes," he answered, "just that. In his ignorance of business—let us be charitable—he was unfortunate enough to mistake his legal right. Just a mere signature, nothing more! But quite sufficient to constitute felony in the eyes of the law."

"But he is innocent!" I cried, clasping my hands in agony. "My poor father a felon? Oh, have you no pity, no mercy?"

"Who has had pity or mercy for me?" he exclaimed, showing the only trace of real feeling I ever saw him exhibit. "I, misshapen, hideous, a mock of nature. I who"—here he broke off abruptly, and added in a voice of forced calmness, "I trust, dear child, that you will spare no expense in the preparation of your trousseau. Our wedding should do honour to our family names."

* * * * *

Yes, it was so. Unsuspicious of the trap laid for him by the wily dwarf, and ignorant of business as a child, my poor father had done that from the consequences of which I alone could save him.

I did not hesitate.

How I passed the intervening period I cannot say, but waking out of what seemed a long dream of misery I found myself at the eve of my wedding day. I had told Sylvan the truth and bidden him a last sad farewell. I had prepared myself for the ordeal, and now only awaited the final sacrifice.

Alone, dazed, tearless, I sat in my chamber, counting the slow hours as they passed.

Suddenly as I sat so, a terrible cry rang through the house, a cry so awful in its pain and horror that the hair arose upon my head. Then there was a sound of feet in the passage, the opening and shutting of doors, loud exclamations, and wild confusion.

I found myself, how, I do not know, with many others in Modred Yale's room. He lay upon the floor with his eyes starting from his head, and with an expression of terror and rage upon his features that I shall never forget—dead! On his neck were the black marks of powerful fingers. The ape Gordon had disappeared.

The superstitious say that Modred Yale had sold his soul to the Evil One, that the ape was a familiar spirit sent to watch the doomed man, and that this familiar had at last claimed his bargain, and Modred Yale's soul had gone to its master. The wiser ones say that, driven to frenzy by the dwarf's cruelty, the animal had at length turned upon him and strangled him to death. No traces of the ape were ever found.

Sylvan, my husband, professes to hold the former belief.

LEIGH HALL.

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS
GIVEN AWAY
EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☛ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 7 distribution must reach us by November 21st, addressed to The 7th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the Fourth Distribution appears on page 651.

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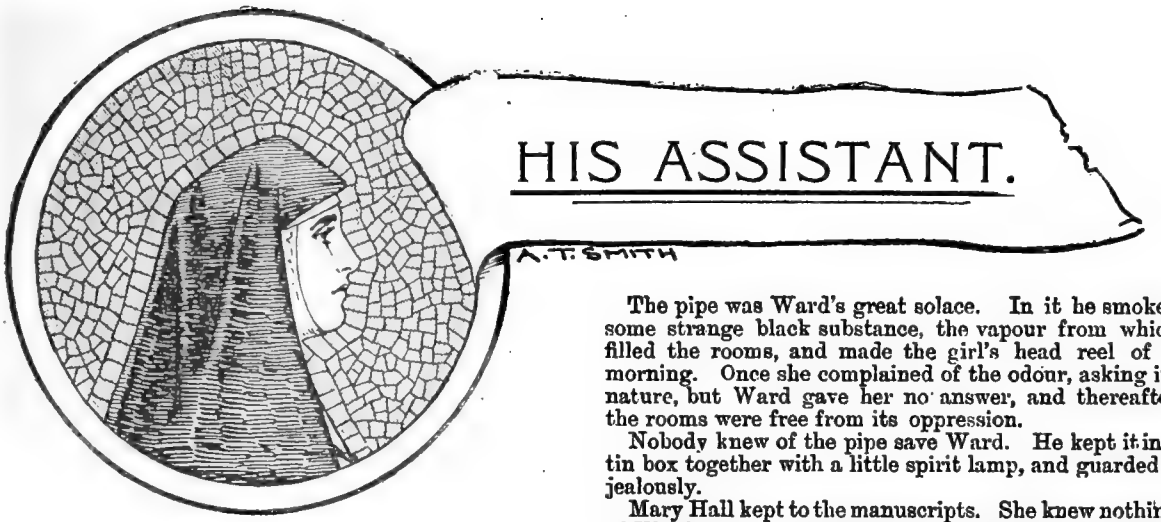

HIS ASSISTANT.

THE door-plate of the room 41, Albany Chambers, London, bore nothing more startling to the minds of the reading public than the words:

DAVID WARD,
LITERARY BUREAU.

David Ward was a little man whose age it was not easy to guess. Sometimes the girl, his assistant, felt sure that he was at least fifty years old. At other times, particularly when he smiled, which was not often, he seemed quite young, almost boyish, in spite of his grey hair. As a matter of fact, he was thirty-seven.

He was the mere skeleton of a man. His clothing hung upon his hook-like shoulders in a loose, dangling fashion, and his face wore a yellow, shrivelled look, much like some of the manuscripts stacked in heaps about the little back office.

Mary Hall did not mind his peculiar make-up. She usually looked at his eyes, which were deep and brown; and watched for the occasional smile, which revealed uncommonly fine teeth.

No. 41, was Ward's home as well as his office. It was characterised by that orderly disorder which somehow dominates a real bachelor den.

Besides the horse-hair couch and easy chairs, there were in the room various stands and book-racks, a tea-table, Ward's desk and the desk at which the girl worked.

On the easterly wall, where the shadows kept tryst with one another and the sunshine seldom fell, was a picture of "Solitude," and on the opposite wall was a lurid painting of the Battle of Waterloo.

There was another painting which hung over Ward's desk, that of a sweet-faced woman, with eyes like Ward's eyes, and soft, brown hair. It had been copied from an old daguerrotype which Ward carried about in a gold locket in the upper pocket of his grey waistcoat. He never, by any chance, wore any other colour than grey.

He was forgetful at times, but there were two things which he never forgot. One was to transfer the gold locket, when, of necessity, he purchased another suit, from the waistcoat pocket of the old to the corresponding pocket of the new suit. The other thing was to keep the mysterious pipe out of the girl's range of vision.

The pipe was Ward's great solace. In it he smoked some strange black substance, the vapour from which filled the rooms, and made the girl's head reel of a morning. Once she complained of the odour, asking its nature, but Ward gave her no answer, and thereafter the rooms were free from its oppression.

Nobody knew of the pipe save Ward. He kept it in a tin box together with a little spirit lamp, and guarded it jealously.

Mary Hall kept to the manuscripts. She knew nothing of Ward's domestic affairs, but she fancied that sleep occupied but little of his time. He never complained of ill-health. He was simply a bundle of nerves, a perfect working machine. There was a strong suggestion of perpetual motion about him, and the girl fancied that when he stopped working his soul would fly from his body like the freed mainspring of a clock.

He had not always lived alone. The girl's predecessor had been a silent old scholar, who had worked with Ward for five years, and had slept on the couch in the back office every night.

In his own peculiar way David Ward grieved sorely when he found old Scott dead there one morning. He advertised again and again for a man like Scott. After a while he decided that there had never been but one of that sort created, and told the girl who had haunted the office for days that she might come and help him out of a labyrinth of manuscripts.

He had a thorough dislike to womankind, but the girl's industry struck him as a good quality in an assistant. Somebody must come to his aid, and the girl came.

She was not pretty. She was too tall, and carried herself with a nervous stride. There was a certain drabness about her that made her fit almost at once into her place among the office fixtures. Her brown hair curled crisply about her rather colourless face, and seemed at variance with her steady grey eyes and sober manner.

At first the rustle of her gown about the office disturbed Ward, but later he became accustomed to it, and even raised his head from a mountain of manuscripts at nine o'clock every work-a-day morning, to listen for the click of her boot-heels upon the tessellated floor of the hall.

If she had taken a solemn oath that she would never weep, faint, indulge in hysterics, or even in adjectives, she could not have been less emotional than she was in his presence.

Once, when she was suffering acutely from nervous headache, she uncorked a bottle of ammonia, which had been standing in the sunshine on the window sill. It exploded, full in her face and eyes. She cried out at the sudden smart, then she thought of Ward and became silent. He appeared not to have heeded at all, but after a few minutes he pushed back his chair and went over to her.

"That wasn't a very bright proceeding," he began in his peculiarly irritating way.

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The girl remained silent. She felt as though she should scream if she opened her mouth at all.

Then she heard Ward busying himself about the room and expected presently to hear a tirade against women in general.

By and by he came back to his desk.

"Take your hands from your face," he said rather roughly.

The girl paid no attention to him.

"Take down your hands! Don't be an idiot!" he said, still more harshly.

The girl's hands came down suddenly. She was about to pour forth some scathing remarks, when there was laid upon her hot eyelids something cool and soothing.

"It's milk," Ward explained briefly.

It was the first time she had ever known him to interest himself in anything save the manuscripts, and it warmed her heart to him.

"That was so good of you," she said gently, resting her head against the back of the chair and trying to smile. If she could have seen through the bit of his handkerchief, she would have beheld a face transfigured by inward joy and light into a real loveliness, such as no man had seen upon it before. Something new and beautiful had found the heart of David Ward, and made the girl seem a very queen to him.

Then his glance fell upon one of his hands. It was like the hand of an old man, wrinkled and yellow. He sniffed contemptuously and went back to his work. But the girl never forgot that one act of kindness.

One day her father died. He had been a scholar, and had taught the girl nearly all that she knew. He was the last of her immediate relations, and she had looked up to him, and had loved him dearly.

She fancied when she went back to Ward again that he would say something, if ever so little, about her sorrow. He failed even to look up from his desk when she came in as usual. The truth was that his heart was so full of sympathy for her that he could say no ordinary thing. When, after an hour or so of silence, he did speak, it was of something entirely foreign to her troubles.

"That abominable Mrs. Tweed has been here again with another lot of rubbish tied up with pink ribbon," he said.

The girl had to smile at his cross face.

"It was blue ribbon last time," she said, trying hard to keep the tremble out of her voice.

A week later, when she had settled her father's affairs and taken a room for herself, she came into the office one morning red-eyed and dispirited.

Ward glanced at her several times before he could bring himself to speak. Then:

"You look as though you'd been tied up in a bundle," he said, with one of his rare smiles.

She knew that she was not a pretty girl. She looked up at him rather curiously.

"I feel worse than I can possibly appear," she answered simply. Then, as she saw the customary half-sneer coming back to his face, "you must try not to notice me for a few days," she said; "by then I shall be used to this," she touched her black gown. Ward turned his face to his work and went on scribbling.

The new, strange state of being went hard with him. In all his life he had never loved before. He thought he had enough of that sort of thing in the tales of woe which he marked with the great cross of his disapprobation, or dug into with his pruning knife, the blue pencil.

After a while he wheeled about in his chair again.

"Girl," he said, "you'd think a man a fool to covet suffering, wouldn't you? I've never had anybody of my own to lose since I can remember. It makes a fellow feel hard not to have any memories. I've tried often to fancy what it would seem like to have known her," he pointed up towards the lady on the wall, over his desk. "After all," he went on, "she is only a myth to me, not my mother. You've no reason to feel so wounded and miserable, girl; you have known joy. I'm a poor sort, body and soul, but I believe I should have loved her, I do."

It was a long speech for Ward to make. The girl sat silent, partly from astonishment, partly from habit.

Ward returned to his work. He was very sorry that he had spoken, and angry because his hands shook like reeds in the wind. He was more than ever an enigma to Mary Hall.

The third year of her stay at Ward's she was discovered by her ideal, a young lawyer with a small practice and a big bump of ambition.

With his keen insight he saw, through the drabness of Mary Hall, a nature strong and brave and womanly.

Unconsciously, at first, he let her influence him to high aspirations and keep him straight and honourable, when there were plenty of chances for him to be otherwise.

And MacGregor grew to love her with all his Scotch might, which was not little.

When he could keep the secret no longer he told her.

They were coming home from the opera of *Martha* at the time.

She was humming a piece of the music, and she seemed to him very sweet in her trim black jacket, straight gown and velvet toque.

MacGregor never beat about the bush much. They were walking briskly homeward.

"Mary," he said suddenly. He had never called her Mary before. "Mary," he said again, "I love you with all my heart."

The girl made no response, her heart was beating to a glad song, no part of the opera of *Martha*. She walked along, looking straight in front of her.

They were nearing an electric lamp.

"Look at me, dear," MacGregor pleaded.

In the midst of the light the girl turned her glad eyes on his. She seemed wondrously beautiful to MacGregor.

He slipped his arm within hers and they walked in silence to the house in which the girl occupied an upper room.

When near the door she stopped for a moment to take her latch-key from her pocket.

MacGregor put his arms about her.

"Aren't you going to speak to me at all, darling?" he asked.

She answered him in the quick, jerky way, common to her.

"It doesn't seem possible," she said. "Not possible at all, you know. Thank you for—for caring, and good-night."

MacGregor laughed boyishly, leaning forward and placing a hand at either side of her face.

"Does this seem possible?" he asked, pressing many kisses on her lips.

"Say 'I love you, Don,'" he urged.

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She looked at him frankly. "I do," she said earnestly. "I do love you, Don."

The girl was very happy. It seemed almost impossible that she should find Ward as grey and skeleton-like as ever that next morning.

But she found him quite unchanged, his face buried in a heap of papers. He nodded to her when she came in.

He was struck by her look of youth, and felt insignificant. He vented his feelings, as usual, by sniffing.

The girl longed to have him happy. She noticed that he had not washed his breakfast things, and she went to work and did them herself.

He watched her dreamily and let himself fancy how it would seem to have her always near him, where he could see her whenever he looked up from his work.

He remembered the strange pipe suddenly, and shuddered.

Somehow, whenever he thought of telling her, the pipe came into his memory.

He had not touched it for a good month, never since he had made up his mind that he must let her know how much she was to him.

Sometimes of an evening a great longing for it would come over him, and he would go to the fire-proof box and take out the evil thing and look at it hungrily. Once he had gone so far as to touch its bowl with the head of a hammer in a menacing way.

But it had a terrible fascination for him, he could never quite finish it with one good stroke.

It had been his friend for so long, his consolation for the lack of human friendship.

By and by he would destroy it for her sake. Somebody had said that a man could not break from its awful charm.

He would disprove all that.

After he had told her that she was his first of women, a beautiful and sweet and comforting thing sent to bless him, he would destroy it.

He tried to write her a good, manly letter; but he thought it read like the poor swashy things which he had corrected for so long.

Then he decided that he would tell her very soon.

"I'm a poor thing," said he, addressing himself in the glass. "A poor thing to be thinking of love. Look at me!"

"I'm a fit subject for the museum," he said, grinning up at the lurid painting of the Battle of Waterloo.

And so it was, that, day after day, he put off telling her, and was more gruff to her than ever before, and he loved her with all the heart in his weazened little body.

One morning she came into the office and straight across to Ward's desk.

"Look, Mr. Ward," she said, smiling down at him. "Read and say that you are glad." She spread out a periodical before him.

Ward looked at her. He had noticed before that she had put off her mourning. She was gowned in brown. Afterwards he recalled her as she appeared to him then.

Mechanically he read the heading of the paper. He saw that it was a society paper, and he followed her finger down a certain column, where he read:

"Mr. Donald MacGregor, the young lawyer who is fast making a name, is engaged to Miss Mary Hall daughter of the late John Hall."

Ward read it through twice. He had never had anybody to lose, he had told her. Drearily he began reading the item a third time, a strange mist made the words dance, and finally blurred them altogether from his sight.

"Is it true?" he heard himself ask in a commonplace way.

"Perfectly true," the girl answered, smiling. "Say that you are glad, Mr. Ward."

"I am glad," Ward said gently. She waited, half expecting that he would say something more. She was removing her wrap when Ward spoke again. "Go out and take a holiday," he said urgently. "Go and enjoy yourself. I want you to be happy. You were meant for happiness. Take a holiday. There's plenty of money in the drawer," he reached over his desk and took out a little roll of notes. "I want you to go out and buy my wedding present for you, whatever you wish for most," he said. He smiled one of his rare smiles and pushed her gently towards the door.

The expression of his eyes struck the girl as infinitely sad.

"I don't want to go," she said with a half sob.

Ward smiled again. "Good-bye, girl," he said very gently, then he shut the door after her and locked it

He came back into the room and stood with folded arms before the painting of his mother.

The refinement of anguish lifted him for a moment above the mere creature that he was. Then a hurt, almost child-like, expression came upon his face.

"I'm a miserable liar, mother!" he said brokenly. "A miserable liar! I am not glad! I loved her so! I needed her so!"

When he had stared at the picture for a while, his face softened. His lips quivered into a smile of adoration for those compassionate eyes.

He went over to the little cupboard suddenly and got out the opium pipe and its trappings.

"For her sake, and for mother's, I will do it," he said musingly.

He took the pipe to a back window, and, leaning out, flung it, with all his might, into the yard, where it struck the bricks and fell in a hundred pieces.

"When I was a boy," he said meditatively, coming back into the room and flinging himself wearily into a reclining chair, "when I was a boy, I never did wrong without being punished severely for it at once."

Ever since his love for the girl had become assured to him he had been under a severe nervous strain. Now that there was nothing to hope for, or to look forward to, he felt strangely calm.

He fell asleep after a time and dreamt happily of the girl. There was not an atom of bitterness in his dreams, and he slept as peacefully as a child.

He was lying in the chair, with his face turned to the window, when the girl unlocked the door the next morning and came in with a little song on her lips.

"You see I have come back to you," she said gaily, crossing over to him.

The sunlight coming through the window slantwise, just touched his forehead and hair.

The rare smile that had now and then transformed his plain face rested full upon it.

Concerning David Ward's heartaches God had called a halt.

JEROME FITZGERALD.

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A Strange Welcome.

MARK WARNER sat in the shade of the big oaks that grew by the kitchen door. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and his coarse hat lay on the grass at his side.

He was leaning forward, his chin resting on his hands, his elbows upon his knees, calmly puffing a short pipe. Near to him sat his wife, busily engaged in stringing beans for dinner.

"It's almost ten years since Ted went away," observed Mr. Warner, blowing a cloud of smoke over a vagrant bumblebee that was buzzing about a hollyhock.

"Ten years this autumn," remarked his wife, without looking up.

"This harvest time," corrected Warner. "I reckerlect it well. He went off just when I was busiest cutting corn, and I had to employ Dick Johnson in his place. Dick wasn't worth his salt, and it was a clear loss of a sovereign and more to me."

"But you can't blame Ted for that," said his wife.

"He might 'a' stayed till the corn was cut."

"He said you wasn't treating him just right—then Ted was our only child."

"I was an only child myself," complained Warner; "and I wasn't treated any better 'an Ted; but I didn't go running away. You remember, my dad wouldn't hear of our being married in a busy time. Says he to me: 'Mark, I ain't going to have a wedding going on right in ploughing time. Wait till the corn's laid in and that'll be plenty of time for wedding arrangements.'"

"Yes," said Mrs. Warner, "and we had to wait, too. My mother was against our being married in the midst of gardening time. She said to me: 'Mary, it ain't no use talking about being married this spring, to say nothing of the work that's got to be done, it would be a waste to kill them chickens till harvest; an' then there's nothing in the garden worth mentioning to make pies, and it's a bad time altogether. Wait till after harvest, Mary,' says she, 'and the blackberries will all be ripe.' Mother was dead against extravagance, and believed in young people minding their parents."

"So she did, and so did father," said Warner, "but things are different now, and p'r'aps I was a little hard on Ted."

"Ted was a good boy."

"Yes; but he kept going with them Jones boys when he knowed that old Jones had treated me like dirt; then he was for ever working that foolish machine idea of his, when he ought to have been at work on the farm."

"He said the machine might make us all rich if he got it right," suggested Mrs. Warner.

"But such foolish things don't ever git right," declared Mark, "and I spect he's found it out by this time. Ted was a good hand to work, though, when he did work, and p'r'aps I ought to have allowed him to have his way about them ideas of his."

"It would have been the best thing—boys will be boys."

"So they will, and Ted was only sixteen—just when a boy knows the least and thinks the most!"

Warner rose and stood leaning against the big oak. His wife got up and went into the kitchen. Presently Sam White came along the lane, carrying a reaping-fork, and stopping, he leant against the fence.

He was a young man of spare build, with a half-inch of downy beard upon his freckled face.

"Father thought you might want someone to help you cut corn," he said, after exchanging greetings with Warner.

"I dunno just yet," the farmer replied. "I'm intending to commence to-morrow morning, though it does seem a bit early. My corn is later 'an yours."

"Yes; about two weeks. Father said if you needed any help he'd come in the morning."

"Well, I shall want a couple of hands for a few days, and I think you an' yer father might both come."

"He'll come; but I've to see to something else."

"I might get another hand. Tell your father to bring one if he can."

"All right. Heard anything from Ted lately?"

"Not for a long time."

"How is he getting on?"

"He don't say. Just says he's well, and working every day."

"Don't talk of coming home?"

"No. S'pose he'll sow his wild oats first."

"Course he will! I was never allowed to sow no wild oats. Well, I must be going. Good day."

He was walking away when Warner called out:

"I say, Sam, you didn't see anything of my ole speckled cow as you came along, did you? She hain't bin up to-day, dang her ole hide, and the calf's 'most bawled itself to death."

Sam stopped abruptly and came back, and stood by the fence.

"I must be losing my senses, that I must!" he said, with an air of vexation. "I was going to tell you and fergot it. I seed her down in the woods as I came along.

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A branch had fell off that big ellum and killed her, an' there she lay as dead as a door nail."

Warner took a long pull at his pipe.

Nothing ever disturbed or excited him in the least.

"She hadn't bin milked this morning, neither," he said, "and I s'pose the tree has spoilt the hide. You can tell your father to come over in the morning, if it ain't raining, and we'll get to work."

The next morning, as Mr. White was starting for Warner's, he saw a young man coming down the road from the direction of the little railway station. He was dressed in a neatly-fitting suit of grey and carried a small leather bag.

The young man looked eagerly at White, and nodding, said:

"Good-morning, Mr. White."

He held out his hand, smiling as he did so.

Mr. White took the proffered hand, looking very much puzzled.

"You seem to know me, but—w'y, bless my soul! it's Ted Warner!"

"So it is," laughed the young man. "I am glad to see some one who remembers me."

"I knowed you as soon as you laughed," said White. "But how you have growed! W'y, you are a man now, bigger 'an your father."

The two walked on in the direction of Warner's farm.

Farmer White was not especially inquisitive, but he was not altogether devoid of a certain amount of curiosity regarding the affairs of his neighbours, and before the two reached their destination, he had learnt several important facts relative to young Warner.

Among other things he learnt that Ted had perfected a most valuable piece of machinery which he had been working on for years, and having patented his invention, he had disposed of it to a wealthy firm in London for a small fortune, and was coming home to share it with his aged parents.

White speculated on the surprise in store for Warner, and he chuckled inwardly as he thought of the joy and amazement Ted's sudden return would bring to the parents.

As they arrived before the farmhouse they saw Mrs. Warner coming from an out-house, carrying a pan of milk.

As Ted came towards her she looked at him keenly, then set the pan of milk upon the ground, her form trembling.

"It's Ted!" she said, in an agitated voice.

She took his hands and kissed him. Then he put his arms about her neck, while the tears ran down his cheeks.

"You have growed so," she said, holding him at arm's length and gazing fondly into his face.

"I was afraid you wouldn't recognise me," he said, "but you cannot deceive a mother's eye."

They stood talking for some moments. Some of the little ducks that were running about the yard came up, and pouncing into the pan of milk, began to swim about in the liveliest manner.

"Where's father?" asked Ted.

"In the house, eating his breakfast. He's a'e with it. Come, let's go in."

She stooped to pick up the pan.

"Them ducks have spoilt the milk," she said, emptying ducks and milks out into the grass.

"Ted's father'll be very glad to see him," said White, as the three walked towards the house.

"Don't say who I am," said Ted, "and we'll see if father will know me."

"That's good," chuckled White. "I'll bet he won't know you at all."

Warner was sitting at the table eating his breakfast when the three entered.

"I've brought you a hand," said White, nodding towards Ted.

"All right," responded Warner. "Sit up to the table and have breakfast."

"I've had mine," replied White, "but I s'pose the hand hain't."

"No, I haven't," said Ted, taking a seat at the table.

"He don't know him, by jingo!" chuckled White inwardly.

"Just help yourself," said Warner, and Ted was not backward in obeying.

Little was said during the meal, and when it was finished, without Warner having shown any signs of recognising his son, White's excitement rose to the highest pitch.

"It's a good un, Warner, that it is," was his mental comment.

"Warner," said White, as the two rose from the table, "I 'spect yer don't know this feller I brought?" and he nodded towards Ted.

Warner slowly drew a pipe from his pocket, and filling and lighting it, said:

"Know him? I know'd him soon as he come in the door. It's about work time, ain't it? Ted, there's an extra knife out in the shed." C. DICKINSON.

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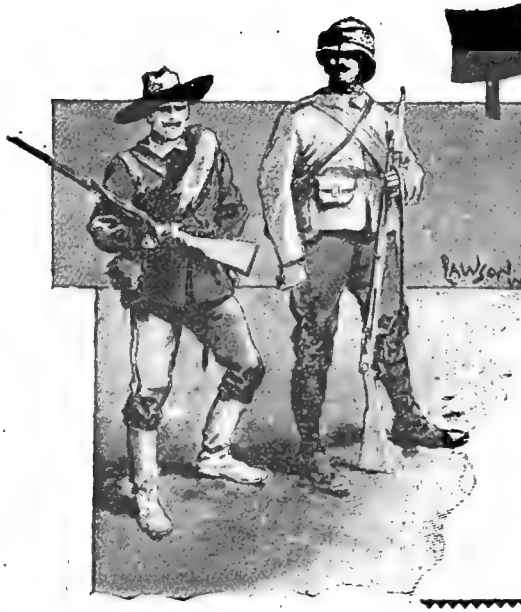

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXXII. (*continued*).

At first de Vismes had an easy task at Dushakh.

Taken unawares, like the rest of the scattered troops on the line, the few defenders of the post surrendered at the first onset, and for a couple of days de Vismes, and his able coadjutors, Adams and Hutchinson, were free to devote their whole time to consolidating their position.

Of course, the news of the raid soon spread from Tejend to Merv, Bokhara, and Samarkand; but beyond the latter point tidings travelled slowly. Applin's conjecture that there was no telegraph line north through the Amu Daria district, was right.

Beyond the Oxus bridge, which is 280 miles from Dushakh, the Russian officers left by Alikhanoff to collect stores for the use of subsequent levies from Siberia, gathered together as large a force as they could muster, and conveyed them by train to Tejend. Sarakhs and Penjdeh were also requisitioned for men from their already depleted garrisons, and at last, about June 18th, a desperate attempt was made to recapture Dushakh.

But the British officers, ten of whom were now on the spot, had not been idle.

They had 20,000 men present, and one half of those had been labouring day and night to throw up extensive lines of earthworks, whilst the remainder of the tribesmen had been rapidly initiated into the Boer method of warfare, being a judicious blending of prone marksmanship and rapid galloping towards or away from an enemy.

The nomads quickly perceived the advantages of steady shooting over their antiquated method of wild firing from the saddle. Long before Colonel Anitchkoff had brought his Bokharans and Siberians within range of the earthworks he had received most convincing testimony of the rapid progress made by these unexpected students in the art of warfare.

In the place of being the attacker he was attacked, and his native allies were routed before he well knew what had happened.

He retired to Tejend and consolidated all his European troops, resolving to force the defences of Dushakh by their aid, and leave to his untrained auxiliaries the congenial task of pursuit.

Peyton had now arrived from Usun-Ada, and the best possible preparations were made to withstand the more determined assault which was made on the early morning of the 22nd.

The Russian skirmishers, consisting mainly of men from the 103rd regiment of the line, were not to be denied. They resolutely pushed the attack home, and Peyton saw, to his grief and dismay, that if once the entrenchments were carried, his host would begin to crumble away into nothingness.

The Turkomans were not cowards, but this manner of fighting was new to them. Were it not for the great gallantry displayed by de Vismes and the other Englishmen, the nomads would long before the end came have flown to their horses and raced back to their hills across the desert.

Peyton, resolute in his despair, had made every arrangement for destroying the railway line, when his gaze was suddenly arrested by the sight of a cloud of horsemen coming up rapidly on the left rear of the Russian attack.

This, then, was the finish. If they had secured cavalry support, it was all over with his hillmen.

He had almost given the order to tear up some hundreds of yards of rails when he was restrained by a growing sense of amazement at the tactics of the approaching cavalry.

Why, they were charging the Russians! Were not those British dragoons? Those streaming puggris were assuredly worn by Bengal Lancers?

There was, to all appearance, some midsummer madness about this astounding apparition. Dream, as the whole thing seemed to Peyton, it was backed up by very tangible reality. This was Colonel Doyne's cavalry brigade, which had reached its destination in the nick of time, to render the utmost service, after a superb march from the Helmund.

Regardless of danger from the scattering enemy, Peyton rode wildly towards the British force.

Recognising Colonel Doyne, he shouted, without any preliminary salutation: "The train, the train!"

The brigadier followed Peyton's emphatic gesture and saw at once what he meant. Standing on the rails a couple of miles away were the engine and eight carriages which had conveyed Anitchkoff and his principal followers to the scene of action.

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A squadron of the Royal Irish Lancers captured the complete fitout in less than twenty minutes, and when Peyton had rapidly explained the great success of his advance on the Caspian, the brigadier detailed one hundred British and one hundred native troops for similar work on the eastern section of the line.

"The train, the train!"

De Vismes was given command and that night the long wooden bridge over the Oxus, stretching in rickety evenness over two miles of swamp, sand, and river, was ruined so completely that no train could possibly cross it during the next couple of months.

The way was now quite clear for Sir George White to effectually dispose his force between the Oxus and the Caspian.

During a lucid interval, Captain Peyton said to the brigadier:

"Well, sir, I am glad to be able to hand over to you an army, such as it is, of 40,000 men, and stores for 400,000, together with a railway line and fourteen ships."

"What do you mean?" said Doyne, smiling and searching for a letter in his pocket book.

"Of course you take command!" replied Peyton.

"Not so," said the other, handing him the letter he had sought for. "My orders are to co-operate with you; I command my cavalry."

The note was from the Commander-in-Chief. It ran:

"Colonel Doyne has undertaken to give you this dispatch if he finds that you are still alive and have been successful in your mission. You are hereby brevetted to the field rank of colonel. If Captain de Vismes be with you, he receives his majority, and the native officers who accompanied you are, if approved by you, raised to the next rank above that they now hold. Other rewards are reserved until I am more fully acquainted with your work."

Peyton did not speak for a moment. He turned his head and looked across the desert, whilst Colonel Doyne lit a cigarette.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Another Agincourt.

"Comrades," wrote Lord Roberts in a proclamation issued to the army on June 1st, "in the forthcoming battle with the French, England demands our services under circumstances that have seldom, if ever before, occurred in her glorious history.

"We must, at all hazards, utterly rout and destroy the enemy.

"This is the crucial struggle of the campaign. The best troops of France are opposed to us. Their numbers far exceed our own, but I know that they cannot equal us in courage, in discipline, in every splendid quality that is found in the British soldier.

"To our hands are committed the destinies of our beloved country. Strong in that sacred trust, I feel in my heart that the issue is already determined. Let us resolve that, God willing, our confidence in victory shall be justified by the result. We must deal the enemy such a blow that the power of France will stagger helpless from our path."

The Commander-in-Chief would not have uttered these stirring words to his men had there not been desperate need for the display of that calm courage which recks not of the chances of war.

There were 400,000 British troops massed in two great armies of similar proportions on both sides of the Seine, in the pastoral valleys between Yvetot and Rouen.

Taught prudence by their previous experiences, the French commanders resolved that their next blow should be a decisive one. For a wonder, therefore, their national vanity was subordinated to the rigid necessities of the moment; and, beyond some trival outpost affairs, no engagement was risked with the invaders until they had assembled such overwhelming forces that, under the ordinary conditions of warfare, they must succeed in hopelessly crushing the two sections of the British army.

On the north bank of the Seine General Saussier contemplated, with the conscious pride of superiority, a superb army of 500,000 men, whilst, on the south, General Mercier commanded a well-equipped force of 450,000.

France had strained every nerve to place these phenomenal numbers rapidly in the field.

All bridges across the river had been blown up to a point far below Yvetot; junction between the different portions of Lord Roberts' troops was rendered apparently impossible without retreat or delay.

The former course meant a moral victory for the French; the latter they resolved to render impossible by delivering a concerted attack at dawn on June 2nd.

Like Trochu during the siege of Paris, General Saussier had his plan; like von Moltke, on the same memorable occasion, Lord Roberts also had a scheme, and it differed materially from that of Saussier.

During the afternoon of June 1st, thirty-eight stout barges were towed up the Seine from a point below Yvetot, where willing hands had for some days past been engaged in fitting substantial level platforms upon them at a uniform height of 6ft. from the water.

Between the two wings of the British army nineteen roads led to the river, and at ten o'clock that night there were nineteen substantial floating bridges spanning the stream in each locality where a crossing was practicable.

About the same hour General Massy, who now controlled the operations on the south side of the river, pushed some 10,000 men close up to the French lines—"Just to keep them awake," he explained to his staff—and whilst the French generalissimo marvelled at the audacity of the English in anticipating the attack of the morrow, 190,000 of the said English were quietly taking up the positions allotted to them on the extensive lines of the northern force.

Shortly before dawn the 10,000, who had made things exceedingly lively for the French in the dark, rapidly withdrew, and when General Saussier was calmly drinking his morning coffee and glancing over the final arrangements for the attack, to commence at 5.30 a.m., it being then four o'clock, the actual disposition of his adversary was as follows:

Three miles in front of his position were 350,000 Britons. General Massy, with 50,000 men, was intrusted with the comparatively easy task of holding the river flank, whilst the barges, having served their purpose, were drawn up on the British bank of the stream and by prior efficiency of design, now formed thirty- eight excellent floating forts in the most exposed localities.

General Saussier did not know of these unexpected events, nor did he know, as he asked for a second cup, that at that precise moment, the British were advancing to attack *him*.

Lord Roberts resolved, from the outset, to risk annihilation for the sake of complete success.

A partial or merely strategic victory would be as bad as a defeat.

The superior French army lay crescent-shape in front and almost overlapping him. He therefore sent the whole of his guns and cavalry to the extreme left with orders to irresistibly pound the French right until it was driven in upon the centre. He split up his forces into six divisions of ten brigades, and in each brigade there were 5,000 men

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He personally kept at his immediate disposal eight additional brigades as a reserve.

Divisional commanders and brigadiers received the most precise instructions that they must each fight on their own line of advance without reference to proceedings elsewhere, and the only deviation from this definite scheme would occur when the French right was obviously driven in, and concentration towards the Rouen road and the Seine should be aimed at.

In a simple phrase, the battle was fought as though the British troops were travelling along the radii of a fan, of which the French constituted the outer circumference. As the fight progressed the fan commenced to contract.

General Saussier finished his second cup of coffee that night in Paris.

He was about to complete his early breakfast when the sound of firing, rapidly growing in volume over a wide segment of the French front, startled him exceedingly.

A staff officer exclaimed: "This is an attack in force."

"Impossible!" shouted the General. "They have impudence the most sublime, but surely not such as this."

An aide-de-camp rode madly up to the house occupied by the Commander-in-Chief.

"My General," he cried, "the English have driven in the pickets, and the whole army is threatened."

"It is unbelievable!" roared the astonished Frenchman, rushing towards his charger. "Fly," he continued, addressing his staff, "to order a general advance, and telephone to Mercier to offer battle at once. We must drive these imbeciles into the sea forthwith."

There could now be no doubt concerning the nature and magnitude of the engagement.

Along a front of seven miles, a determined conflict was already in progress, and the mad fury of the combat rent the air with its din, whilst affrighted birds mingled their cries with the screaming of shells and the whistling of bullets.

The French guns were caught in a most disadvantageous position, being massed in rear of the centre, and the fierce and wholly unexpected onslaught of the British momentarily drove back the French line, and hampered the exertions of the artillery.

At last General Saussier ordered ten batteries to the front, to stop the British advance at all hazards.

Miscalculating the position of his opponents, the French artillery officer intrusted with the movement actually galloped his guns into the fighting line of a brigade composed of the London Scottish, the Queen's Westminsters, the Artists' Corps, and the Inns of Court Volunteers, strengthened by a battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

"Bayonet the gunners, Westminsters!" shouted Colonel Sir Howard Vincent, as he perceived the endeavours of the French to wheel rapidly and extricate themselves.

"Shoot the horses, 23rd," yelled Colonel Blyth, who knew the most effective method of throwing guns out of action.

This combination of effort soon achieved its purpose. The French artillerymen fought like men possessed, for the gunner in all lands cares not for life when his beloved weapon is in danger. It was the first experience of the Volunteers in the dread realities of war, but they took up the points of the situation like puppies lapping new milk. They absolutely climbed over men, guns, and horses, and it seemed as though, in a fit of Gargantuan rage, they desired to pound the lot into fragments, until their officers hastily persuaded them to form up in column again.

Not a moment too soon was order restored.

Even the brief diversion created by the mad exploit of the artillery enabled the commander of the French centre to rally his disgusted, but unbeaten troops. In the small town of Les Petits Osiers, a congeries of narrow streets and lanes, he took his stand, and when the British brigade resumed its advance, it was met by a murderous and well-sustained fire from a vastly superior force.

For a little while the Brigadier, Colonel Blyth, made his men lie down until he sent to Major-General James Alleyne, who was in charge of the division, for reinforcements.

But every brigade was hotly engaged, and relief was impossible.

Colonel Blyth hesitated no longer. Whatever the result to himself and his men, the French must be driven out of Les Petits Osiers. Calmly trotting his horse into the bullet-swept zone in front of his men he shouted, pointing to the town with his sword: "Now, who leads?"

Few could hear him owing to the noise of the firing, but all understood his action. Every man sprang to his feet and a race ensued between the different regiments as to which should be first to close with the enemy.

Alas, many fell by the way! Of that fine brigade it was afterwards computed that 400 men were lost during that frightful onrush.

But heroism such as this was not to be denied, and in a few minutes they were at close quarters with the French. The latter, nothing loth, sought to engulf them in a sea of lead and steel, and in a few minutes the entire brigade must have been annihilated had not help arrived.

Wiping the blood from a cut across his forehead.

Lord Roberts, at first anxiously noting the progress of the fight from the tower of an ancient church, was assured by about 5.30 a.m. that all was well on both wings. He descended, therefore, and moved up the reserve division to strengthen the centre attack where he counted upon the most stubborn resistance.

Among the troops under his direct command was a splendid brigade of 6,000 men, composed exclusively of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Unequalled throughout the world for physique and steadiness on parade, these stalwart troops were much more at home in active service than when engaged in their ordinary duties, and there had been no little grumbling among the men when they were not selected to take part in the first attack. But, unknown to themselves, fate had reserved for them a predominant share in determining the fortunes of the day.

Perceiving with quick glance the momentary check of Colonel Blyth's force, and intuitively realising the difficulties against which he was contending, Lord Roberts now dispatched the Royal Irish Constabulary to his assistance.

At the precise moment when the Fusiliers and the London Corps were seemingly swallowed up by overwhelming odds of fresh troops, the Irish Military Police dashed at the double into the town and set about the congenial and oft-practised task of clearing the streets.

Now, street-fighting is an art in itself, and the French soon found that Ireland had developed the pastime to a pitch of excellence never dreamt of on the Continent. Whether using bullet, bayonet, or butt-end of a rifle, the Irish policeman was an expert of the first quality, and the small, if active, Frenchman was no match for the genial giant who proceeded to mercilessly instruct him in the science of an election fight.

In ten minutes there were over a thousand French soldiers stretched, killed or badly injured, on the paving stones of Les Petits Osiers, and the rest were swept into the open country at the rear, as though a tornado had struck them.

"Faith," cried a pleasant-looking leviathan, wiping the blood from a cut across his forehead when a moment's halt was possible, "that reminds me of nothin' in the world so much as like a Cork demonsthration."

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"It's a thrue word you spake, O'Reilly," said the man whom he addressed. "Th' only difference is that a Cork mob wouldn't have quit so aisy."

Lord Roberts, informed by signals from the church tower that the artillery and cavalry had driven in the French right, and that the extreme British left was already beginning to swing round, made up his mind at this moment to strike a tremendous blow at the discomfitted enemy.

Rouen was but three miles distant.

He had determined to attack the city next day with a portion of his forces, but the remarkable rapidity with which the huge French force had melted away before the ardour of his men, suggested the possibilty of capturing the place forthwith, when organised resistance was least probable.

Hastily explaining his design to Alleyne, to whose division he united the entire reserve, he sent off several aides to secure the co-operation of the mounted arms, which, by-the-way, were led by Lieut.-General Sir Drury Lowe.

Some further minor details were arranged with lucidity and dispatch, with the result that by 9.30 a.m. a fresh set of ideas were in full operation, having for their objective the capture of Rouen itself.

Alleyne's division marched in two columns along parallel roads straight for the gate known as the Port de Havre, and the cavalry and guns were instructed to press hard for the same point, eleven o'clock being the hour fixed for the combination of the attack.

The flying French were by this time seized with absolute panic.

To their excitable nature it seemed as though fate forbade that they should prevail against the British. General Saussier, after in vain risking his life repeatedly in the effort to stem the tide of disaster, had been forced by his staff to desist.

He hurriedly gave his second in command orders to defend the town at all hazards until Mercier could come to his assistance, and then resolved to proceed by special train to Paris.

He was captured by a dragoon, without the slightest attempt at rescue.

In view of the inflammable condition of that fickle city, this resolution was a wise one. He was the head of the army, and it was far better that the Government should be made aware of the magnitude of the disaster by himself than by the necessarily more unconvincing means of a dispatch.

Sir Drury Lowe was vigorously shelling the retreating force with shrapnel—his cavalry delivering charge after charge in the successful endeavour to more hopelessly crowd the French into the centre—when news of Lord Roberts's fresh design reached him.

By a mastery stroke of genius he at once changed his tactics.

Hastily massing his cavalry, he caused them to charge into the scattered but still numerous foe for a distance of about 800 yards. The division was then to wheel to right and left, thus opening up a clear path for the guns which followed in their track, and enabling them to decimate their opponents from the closer range.

This terribly effective manœuvre was repeated again and again, and the French losses during the next hour were simply colossal.

There was no time to think of any other consideration but the one object in view. The claims of humanity were necessarily thrown to the winds. Gunners and horsemen individually were but insignificant portions of this awful engine of death and destruction.

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The French general intrusted with the defence of Rouen, to which not a thought had been given prior to the battle, was madly urging his horse along a crowded and hopelessly encumbered road, when he was struck heavily by a section of a shell.

He was captured by a dragoon without the slightest attempt at rescue by the frenzied and heedless mob of soldiers, whose desperate rage was now centred upon one consideration only—the desire to save their lives.

There were many opportunities when, had they rallied in the slightest degree, they must have hindered if not wholly stopped the murderous attacks of the British guns and cavalry.

Fewer men would, indeed, have been lost in attempting such a deed than in the blind fury of the flight. But arms, ammunition, knapsacks, belts, even coats and headgear, had been thrown aside, and the human torrents poured on, they knew not how nor whither.

Many died from sheer exhaustion, some went mad and danced and sang wild snatches of familiar ballads—whenever there was an obstacle in front lifelong comrades tore savagely at each other to gain another pace towards safety.

When the Lincolnshire regiment reached the outer line of fortifications it was hard to distinguish them from the dishevelled crowd of fugitives pouring into the city.

The *sous-officier* in charge of the guard did, it is true, realise what was happening, and strove to close the iron doors and raise the drawbridge.

It was the Mayor of the city.

He was promptly seized, and almost wrenched limb from limb by those of his own countrymen who would have been shut out by his action.

So well had the attack been timed that Lowe's cavalry and Alleyne's infantry entered the town together. The two British commanders rode into the Grande Place almost at the same moment. Of organised resistance there was practically none, but the stern necessity of war rendered it imperative that the ghastly slaughter should continue, for even yet a moment's breathing time given to the enemy might mean the complete failure of the bold movement.

One portion of a battery had managed to struggle up thus early—four guns of D Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery—and Major Eustace was ordered to at once open fire along the broad straight boulevards. He rapidly placed his guns in position. In a few seconds the shrapnel would have gone shrieking down the thoroughfare into the mass of fugitives, now, unfortunately, containing women and children as well as panic-stricken men, when a gentleman in plain clothes, bearing a white handkerchief tied to a walking-stick, ran through the main entrance of the Hotel de Ville, and bravely advanced up the street in the very face of the guns.

General Sir Drury Lowe rode forward to meet him.

It was the Mayor of the city, and he took it upon himself, in the absence of any proper military authority, to yield unconditionally.

* * * * *

Early that morning General Mercier had advanced with a splendid display of horse, foot, and artillery, to sweep the English out of France on the south side of the Seine.

He quickly discovered that he was fighting the air, and the flanking parties on the right also found to their cost that the Seine was held in force. Shortly afterwards the telephone from General Saussier's headquarters informed him of the fierce attack made by the British, and he continued to receive conflicting messages until all communications suddenly ceased.

As a matter of fact, any further information must have been conveyed in a strong Irish brogue, as the Royal Irish Constabulary had just entered the building.

Mercier, of course, wasted both men and temper in a useless duel with the well-posted and considerable army corps under Massy's command. At last came definite tidings. Saussier was irremediably beaten and Rouen was occupied.

The French General vowed, in all manner of strange expletives, that the English should yet be worsted, and he forthwith put into operation the most brilliantly-conceived and deadly tactical movement that Lord Roberts had so far been called to face.

He valiantly set out to march to the estuary of the Seine, with the intention of crossing the river by hook or by crook, and recapturing Havre, thus imperilling the British base and totally destroying their lines of communication for supplies and reinforcements.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Mercier's Mistake.

General Massy kept keen watch and ward at his post on the north bank of the Seine. By midday he became aware that the vast French army beyond the river was engaged in some definite move, but he could not discover its purport.

A captive balloon which he sent up for the purpose of finding out the direction taken by the enemy was destroyed by a shell filled with an explosive specially designed to cover an immense area. These missiles were in possession of both forces, and ballooning was, early in the campaign, rendered practically impossible by this means.

Foiled in his endeavour, and knowing well the futility of dispatching scouts across the river to ascertain the line of march of such an immense host as that commanded by General Mercier, the Englishman adopted the last resource of the modern philosopher—he lit a cigar, and proceeded to calmly reason out the situation, choosing Major Harington for his confidant, as the latter happened to be near him.

"Mercier has three courses open to him," he said reflectively. "He can attempt to recapture Rouen, in which case the chief will know about his intention before I do. If he is wise, he will retreat to Le Mans, and compel us to follow him before we advance on Paris. In this case we can do nothing to-day or to-morrow, and by the time we are ready for an advance we will have learnt his position. His third course—and, by Jove, I hope he won't take it—is to advance towards Havre and try to cut into our lines of communication."

"Well, sir," said Harington, "it seems to me that the last alternative is the only one to guard against immediately. There is a gunboat about five miles down the river. Shall I ride there, get ferried across, and see if I can find out where the heads of his columns are?"

"The very thing," cried the General. "Is your horse fresh enough?"

"He has done nothing but eat all the morning."

"Off you go, then. Take a small escort with you in case of accident. Report to me here, if possible, between three and four o'clock."

Harington chose a sergeant and six troopers of the Queen's Bays to accompany him and the party rode away at a sharp trot.

They soon found the tiny warship, and the Commander lowered a boat to row them across, the horses swimming whilst the men held the bridles.

Once on the other side they struck straight into the country and made for the highest point in the vicinity, some two miles distant. There was neither desire nor

It was not three o'clock when Harington dashed up to the divisional headquarters.

necessity for caution. Speed was the chief requirement, and there were no hostile vedettes to be seen.

By 1.30 p.m. they were breasting the hill from the westward, and on nearing its summit Harington and the sergeant dismounted so as to reach the crest without showing against the skyline.

Both men whistled softly to express their amazement as they saw the entire French force heading towards the coast in dense masses, with a vast commissariat in the rear, and a cloud of cavalry rapidly advancing towards the place where they were standing concealed by some brush wood.

Harington waited a few minutes to take accurate note of the enemy's disposition. Then the Sergeant exclaimed anxiously: "If we don't hurry, sir, they'll see us."

"You are right," said the Major. "It will certainly be better that we should not be noticed."

They rode at a breakneck pace down the hill and were soon hidden by the trees on the road at its base. Once there Harington told the non-commissioned officer to keep in touch with the enemy's whereabouts so far as he could, and whenever there was anything definite to communicate, to send one of his party to the river with orders to cross by some means and give his information to the nearest officer, with a request to forward it immediately to Lord Roberts and General Massy.

It was not three o'clock when Harington dashed up to the divisional headquarters, covered with dust, and his charger steaming from the combined effects of the double bath and a fast gallop.

"Take one of my spare horses," cried the General on hearing the news, "and go to the Commander-in-Chief. I have just heard he is at Rouen. It is four miles and a good road."

Harington was desperately hungry, but he did not dare to suggest a moment's pause lest some other staff officer should be selected for this important mission.

Declining the offer of a fresh mount he set off again at a good hunting pace, and in half-an-hour he was clattering over the paving-stones of Rouen to the Hotel de Ville, where he found Lord Roberts seated in the vestibule, with the Duke of York and several divisional commanders, partaking of a hasty meal.

His lordship listened to the recital in silence, only interjecting a question as to the probable number of Mercier's guns.

Harington's diplomatic experiences now stood him in good stead, else he would have been slightly nervous. As it was, he spoke quite collectedly, and evidently impressed the distinguished soldiers present by his lucidity and powers of observation. His final arrangements for obtaining further news by means of the dragoons elicited a nod and a smile from the Chief, but as he concluded a deep silence fell upon the company.

Every man present felt that the situation was one of unusual gravity, and they all waited until Lord Roberts should express his views.

After a marked pause the hero of Kandahar, who had been scrutinising the marks left on his boots by the stirrup-leathers, suddenly looked at Harington and said; "When did you last have anything to eat?"

This wholly unexpected query went straight to the youngster's soul, for his eyes had unconsciously travelled

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towards some meat pies and sandwiches on the table. He blushed furiously beneath his outer crust of perspiration and dust as he stammered: "At five o'clock this morning, sir."

"I thought so," said Lord Roberts. "Sit down and have a snack. Don't hurry. Orderly, bring some more bottled beer."

Teddy required no second invitation. His youthful appetite was simply ravenous, and a lot of men would give pounds for the thirst which he slaked with a first long draught of honest English beer.

Lord Roberts was discussing Mercier's move with the Duke of York and the other generals present, when a cavalry orderly drew up outside, and a moment later the sentry at the door announced "a letter from General Massy for Major Harington."

Everyone, Harington included, imagined that some fresh incident bearing upon the French tactics had happened, and the common thought was that it was curious the information had not been sent direct to the Commander-in-Chief. The moment that Teddy glanced at the envelope he saw, to his bewilderment, that the handwriting was Irene's, and the cover bore the unmistakable London postmark.

Shortly after his departure Massy had received the post-bag, and, finding this letter, thought it would be a kindly thing to send it on to Harington—or it might not reach him for hours. But now the young officer was utterly at a loss to explain the occurrence, and the entire party were looking at him, eagerly awaiting the expected intelligence.

"Come, Major Harington, why don't you open it and learn what's the latest development?" said Lord Roberts, for Teddy had laid the note on the table.

Harington answered with the calmness of despair: "It's not from General Massy, sir."

"Then who on earth is it from?" was the Chief's very natural question.

"From a lady, sir." Teddy positively glowed.

Not a man in the room except Harington but laughed heartily at this unlooked for explanation.

"From a lady!" repeated Lord Roberts, with affected astonishment. "Do you mean to say that, in addition to your other activities, you find time for the affairs of the heart?"

If he did not wish to appear for ever ridiculous, Teddy knew that he must now tell the complete truth.

"It is from my *fiancée*, sir," he said, "Lady Irene Vyne, and I presume that it came to hand shortly after I started to find your lordship, so General Massy was good enough to send it after me."

"Ah," said the Commander-in-Chief, "you are a lucky fellow. You get your rewards quickly. Please ask me to the wedding. Meanwhile, you are transferred to my staff. I will explain to General Massy. You had better send a note back with the orderly, directing your servant to bring your baggage to the Hotel des Bains, Havre. We go there by train within an hour."

What talisman was there in Irene that she was so constantly associated with her lover's good fortune? It was the memory of her words that impelled him to the brave deed which won him promotion and the Victoria Cross. And now that fortune had again sought him—for it was no small thing to be thus pitchforked into the headquarters staff—her sweet personality became interwoven with his fate at the precise moment the fickle goddess had smiled upon him. No wonder he furtively kissed the note before he stowed it away beneath the left lappel of his field tunic.

His scattered senses returned as he heard Lord Roberts say: "Mercier has done the best possible thing to help us. By retreating on Le Mans he would have forced us to pursue him. An advance on Paris must be regarded as suicidal with such an army on our flank. As it is, Massy's division and the fleet can hold him in check until our men have had a night's rest, and are fit to cross the Seine in pursuit. Be good enough, gentlemen, to see to it that an abundance of rations be issued, and that none but the most necessary duties be performed. We are quite safe from attack. Divisions will commence to cross the river tomorrow at 7 a.m. I will return from Havre about that hour. You, Alleyne, will make all arrangements for holding Rouen, and a strong corps of observation should be pushed forward five or six miles along the Paris road tonight."

A little later the assembly broke up, and after Harington had seen to the care of his gallant charger he was ready to attend the Commander-in-Chief and the Duke of York on their way to Havre.

Here they met Lord Charles Beresford. Telegrams from the front announced that two of Harington's scouts had recrossed the Seine to bring tidings of the steady advance of Mercier's corps, and the latest news showed that the French were in bivouac for the night at a point nearly opposite Yvetot.

* * * * *

At noon on June 3rd, over 250,000 British troops were so posted as to cut off General Mercier's line of retreat towards Le Mans, and at six o'clock the same evening Lord Charles Beresford, who, conjointly with the Duke of York, was intrusted with the defence of Havre, was informed of the French advance through the woods opposite Caudebec.

Each vessel in the fleet had sent half her crew and all her boats to the river, and when darkness shrouded the landscape in gloom, there was not a yard of water unpatrolled for a distance of nearly eight miles.

Mercier laid his plans well. Strong rafts were hastily knocked together and carried to the banks on gun carriages. At midnight a combined attempt was made to effect a crossing, and thenceforth a series of murderous affrays commenced between the sailors and the French. It was during those few terrible hours before dawn that the British navy suffered greater loss in men than resulted from any other engagement throughout the war.

Every combat was a personal one. Small parties of equal strength and determined courage attacked each other resolutely, and the swift current of the Seine carried out to sea many a ghastly token of the fury of the fight.

But daylight came at last and the weary sailors were able to leave the task of defence to Massy's division, which had now arrived.

Not a Frenchman had reached the opposite shore alive, and Mercier had lost a great number of men and even more valuable time in a fruitless enterprise.

Furious with rage, he brought up all his artillery and commenced to shell the opposing heights. But the fleet soon took a strong hand in this game. When the tide permitted, the gunboats and lighter cruisers stood into the estuary of the Seine and effectually engaged the French artillery, whilst the heavier ships threw shells far inland amongst the thick clusters of troops, who were compelled to stand galled and inactive beneath this fresh infliction.

And so the day wore, amidst wild galloping of the French staff and objectless movements of divisions and ceaseless attempts, ever becoming more faint-hearted, to cross the river.

As night came on the French leader received unmistakable tidings of Lord Roberts's advance. The pursuing army was now only four hours distant, and, to cap all else, a colossal mistake by the transport had resulted in a scarcity of ammunition for the Lebel rifle.

Provision had only been made for two days' operations, and the reserve was in Rouen!

Summoning his divisional commanders, Mercier told them

the exact position of affairs. He concluded by announcing that if they failed to reach the north side of the river at the next attempt there was nothing left but to capitulate.

Nerved by his words, his subordinates swore that they would succeed, and every preparation was made for a tremendous effort on the lines adopted during the previous night.

British audacity, however, supplied another solution to the problem which distracted the French Commander-in-Chief and his Staff. At ten o'clock Alleyne led his division across the river. Without a moment's hesitation he forced in the French vedettes and delivered a strong assault upon the enemy's position. In the darkness the numbers of the French were of little avail. The fighting was mostly between regiments and brigades; with energetic purpose on the one side, and irresolute uncertainty on the other.

An hour later Lord Roberts's first division surprised the French rear, and when dawn broke over the scattered combatants, his second division had outflanked the enemy on the south-west.

The rapidly growing light showed the British position to be a very favourable one. Even under equal conditions they would probably have beaten the French after a severe fight. Lord Roberts knew that his opponents must be dispirited, but he did not know that they were practically disarmed.

He realised that the crucial point in the campaign had now been reached, and the severe physical and mental strain under which he had lived for many weeks, and especially during the past three days, rendered him haggard and pallid in the extreme.

But the indomitable spirit of the great soldier who is so loved by the rank and file of the British army sustained him even in this desperate moment, when the fortunes of England apparently trembled in the balance.

He proceeded quietly, if somewhat slowly, to give the necessary directions for a combined attack by all arms, but suddenly Harington cried: "An officer with a small escort is riding towards us with a flag of truce!"

The Commander-in-Chief's iron nerve did not desert him at this momentous intelligence. He examined the party carefully through his glasses before he said: "What is the meaning of it, I wonder?"

The French envoy was soon before him. Saluting respectfully, he said: "My name is General Forêt, and I am commissioned by the Commander-in-Chief to arrange terms of capitulation and thus prevent useless bloodshed."

"The only terms I can offer," replied Lord Roberts, "are those of unconditional surrender."

The Frenchman looked the Englishman squarely in the face ere he strove to utter a protest. But he saw that argument was useless with this slight, stern Briton, who gazed at him so resolutely with his steel-blue eyes.

Yet he clung to his mission to the last. "Surely," he went on, "in view of our superior numbers, and taking into consideration the fact that unfortunate circumstances alone prevent us from offering battle, in which case—I say it with all esteem for yourself and your brave troops—we would probably beat you, you should grant the officers liberty on parole and disband the army corps."

"It is impossible, sir," replied his lordship. "The conditions under which this war is fought do not permit of such terms being accorded. Do you refuse? I am about to order the advance."

General Forêt hesitated a moment before he uttered the fateful words: "My orders are to yield, unconditionally or otherwise." Then, as if to excuse himself, he cried, with tears of anger in his eyes: "France is ruined by her own acts. Our men are armed with empty rifles!"

The "Cease Fire" was sounded, and before night fell arrangements were in progress for the speedy transportation to England of this host of prisoners of war.

France had now lost over a million of her best troops.

(To be continued.)

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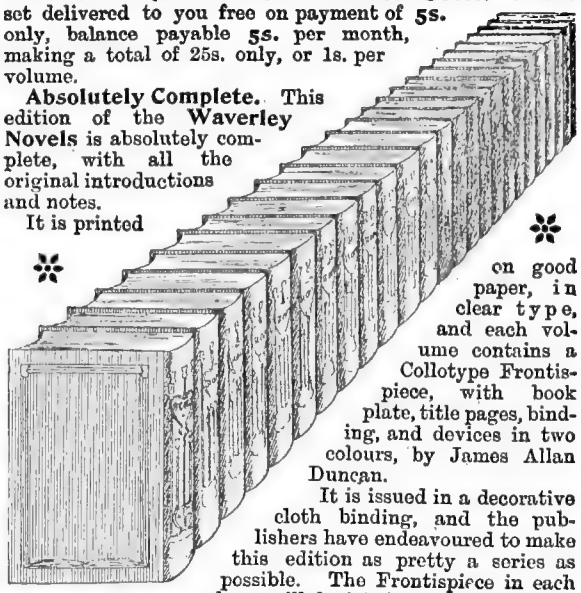

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A "Hero" and a "Martyr."

Day by day he thought of it, and night by night he brooded upon it, till gradually there developed in his mind a direful purpose, born of a fixed idea that so often pushes the one possessed of it to success and fame, but still more often becomes the propelling agent to crime.

But to comprehend what follows we must go back a little—ten years—to the time when Jacques Fleurnois, a young and unknown physician, a native Marseillais, and without a sou in his pockets, had come to settle and practise his profession in Paris.

Cold and wet and semi-starvation were daily visitors to his garret in the Rue Nouvel before he could secure patients enough to provide for his simplest wants. Then one day, without the slightest warning, that fickle jade, Fortune, took a turn in his favour. Amelia Flint, an English maiden lady of mature age but ample means, true to thrifty instincts of her British nature, came to take up her quarters in the cheap little hotel where Dr. Fleurnois lodged, and to "do" Paris at her leisure.

Taken suddenly ill one night, a physician was needed in haste, and Dr. Fleurnois was called. He was as shrewd as skilful, and Miss Flint as susceptible as the rest of her sex who had reached forty years without suffering from a touch of Cupid's dart. He was ten years her junior, but what did that matter when she had a hundred thousand pounds secure in her own right, was absolutely alone in the world without a single living relative, and exactly the wife for a needy wooer?

In six weeks' time, so well did the Doctor exert his fascinating powers, Miss Amelia Flint, spinster, had become Mdme. Jacques Fleurnois.

Suffering and privation were of course gone for ever, but, alas for the plans of the happy bridegroom, he had forgotten to reckon in his calculation the fact that his wife was not a fool.

He had wanted and expected to get absolute possession of her money in making Miss Flint his wife, but Amelia, though willing to commit the folly of marrying a foreigner ten years her junior, had a clear head for business.

She held fast her property, both principal and interest, though she agreed to the securing of her income to her husband for life should he chance to survive her, the bulk of her property to be distributed at his death according to her will.

She cared for his comfort, looked after his home, catered to his taste, and made him a handsome allowance, but neither caresses nor wrath could induce her to sign over to him any portion of her estate.

One might almost say that she knew or felt instinctively the important factor her wealth presented in the maintenance of the peace and happiness of her home life.

He had married her for her money, and he did not get it, at least, not all. He hated his wife for this and, as I say, a direful purpose began to develop in his mind, a purpose all the stronger and more determined because, as the years passed on, Dr. Fleurnois fancied himself on the verge of an important medical discovery, which money was required to perfect—money by the thousand francs—and which could not be saved from his allowance or his wife's judiciously invested income.

Again and again he had appealed to his wife and urged her to peril her property in behalf of this enterprise, but persuasion, tenderness, anger, and threats—and turn by turn, he tried them all—were equally unavailing. Madame Fleurnois had been poor herself once, and never again, if she could help it, should the bitter bread of poverty be pressed to her lips. Her money was safe in sound Treasury bonds, and there it should stay. Such threats, too, as he persisted, would speedily oblige her to appeal to the protection of the British consul.

"And then, *mon cher mari*," said she, looking her husband full in the face, "I should go back to my own country and leave you to your own devices. A good home and a comfortable living, as you have, is worth at least a civil tongue in your head; I'd advise you to keep it."

The little conjugal tempest had left its mark, though Fleurnois was too alive to his own interests to permit it to stand long in the way of a reconciliation with his wife.

A drive in the Bois, a little dinner in the Café Anglais, and to all appearances the Fleurnois household had settled again to its former peaceful train.

In the husband's mind, however, was that ever malignant and darkening purpose. His invention absorbed his entire thoughts; the money needed for its developement he longed for as hungrily as a starving animal longs for a bone.

If only his wife could be brought to reason, or only be brought—to die. The terms of the marriage contract assured him her entire income, and, perhaps, after all, she had made no will.

* * * * *

The cholera was now raging in Europe, had reached Marseilles, and was suspected at Havre. Paris was tremulous with apprehension, nobody could be certain where its ravages would end or where next the dread plague would fasten its tentacles. Still, in spite of the rapidly growing shadow of a terrible epidemic, Dr. Fleurnois thoughts hovered always about the malignant idea that had now taken entire possession of him. Naturally, from wishing his wife's death to laying plans to accomplish it was only a step, and a step easily taken.

Poison must be the means, poison that left no traces before or after death, for, like all criminals of his calibre, Jacques Fleurnois was afraid of the law.

Sitting one morning reading the daily bulletin of the progress of the cholera plague, the following paragraph in a treatise upon the subject by a well-known authority caught his attention:—

"Timidity and fright," said the great authority, "in the handling of the plague, was doubly to be deprecated, for the reason that it not only predisposed persons to the contract of the disease, but also because it blinded justice and assisted crime; briefly, the effects and symptoms of certain mineral poisons were exactly similar to those of the first stages of the cholera disease, and therefore

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such poisons feloniously administered would produce—as many times he believed they had—a death that was really a murder, but that passed unnoticed and unsuspected. It was well to be warned."

Jacques Fleurnois read the passage again carefully, laid the paper aside, and two hours later announced to his wife that he had made up his mind.

"I'm ashamed of myself," said he: "I ought to have gone before; I'm a Marseillais and I'm going now, at once, to volunteer my services for duty in my native town; the cholera is hourly increasing there, and the Government has issued an appeal for all the skilful attendance that Paris can spare. You, of course, will remain here——"

"Remain here, Jacques—I!" exclaimed Madame Fleurnois, surprised. "Certainly not; I shall go with you. Someone must look after your food and the proper condition of your home to keep you in health for your work. I'm a doctor's wife, and a doctor's wife's place is at her husband's side. I go, and that settles it."

Dr. Fleurnois had calculated upon this decision and laid his plans accordingly.

His wife, he said, was right; cleanliness and good nourishment were two-thirds the battle, in his opinion, and she certainly would be of great assistance to him if she was not afraid, etc., etc.

Two days later the thing was done, and they were installed in a comfortable little apartment in the healthiest and airest part of the town, with a stout, strong-armed *bonne* to wait upon them.

Neither husband nor wife seemed to fear the infection, and so, for nearly a fortnight, their stay in the dirty and pest-ridden city passed without a break or special incident in their busy lives. Then the epidemic began to abate, the cases grew fewer, and deaths less frequent, and Mdme. Fleurnois began to talk of the return to Paris.

For two days now everything had been bright and cheerful. The sultry heat of September had fled before a rapidly freshening sea-breeze that seemed to sweep from its path all illness and death, and this morning Mdme. Fleurnois had gone to the Cannebière market to lay in a stock of flowers. She stayed so long that the Doctor, apparently impatient for breakfast, at last touched the bell, and told the *bonne* to bring in the coffee—he would wait no longer.

He really had seen from the window his wife returning, though he did not say so, as he hurried Toinettei with the plates and coffee-pot, and when she had gone again to the kitchen for hot milk to fill up the cups, he hastily dropped the contents of a little white paper that he took from his pocket into the sugar already placed in the cup for his wife.

He had scarcely resumed his seat and his paper when she entered the room, her hands full of flowers, and a face of concern that she had kept her husband waiting so long.

"I am truly half-starved," she cried, "and you were right, Jacques, not to wait for me longer. There's a man too, from the board of physicians, calling for you down stairs at the door."

And the Doctor, anxious as he was to see his wife drink the coffee, was obliged to rise and go and see what the messenger wanted, while Mdme. Fleurnois threw off her bonnet, laid aside her flowers, and took her seat at the table.

As she did so, she glanced with the instinct of a housekeeper at her husband's cup; something was floating on the liquid, an insect of some kind shaken probably from her roses, and helplessly bobbing about in the steaming fluid. She took up a spoon and lifted it out, but spilled the coffee into the saucer as she did it in a way that still more offended her fastidious eye.

Really it was too bad! What a mess she had made of it. And not time, with Jacques so hurried, to have a fresh cup drawn for him. Ah! she had it—she didn't mind for once a splash or two, while Jacques was always so particular.

The exchange was made, the coffee drunk, and Mdme. Fleurnois all ready to help her husband to a fresh piece of omelet when he returned to the table, as he did in a moment, to swallow his coffee at a gulp and hastily excuse himself.

Fresh cases had broken out in the suburbs and he must go at once. He wouldn't return for lunch, but she could look for him for dinner."

And the Doctor, with a strange, wild glance at his wife's empty cup, turned and was gone.

Left alone, Mdme. Fleurnois fidgeted and pottered about the neat little apartment, and finally went into the kitchen to make a strong stock soup for dinner.

Jacques didn't seem well, she thought, and would be sure to neglect his lunch and need something strengthening. How white he looked, too, poor fellow, when he went away.

And all day long the wild eyes and drawn lines of her husband's face, as she had seen him last, haunted her memory and made her restless.

Six, seven, eight, and far into the night, the little table with its flowers and its delicate larded roast remained set and waiting for the master who did not come.

Instead there came with daylight a rap at the door, and a messenger from the Prefect of the Police apprising her that her husband would never return.

Dr. Fleurnois was dead, seized by the plague that he had fought so gallantly and so far with impunity.

They could not send for her, of course, and in accordance with sanitary laws then in force, she could not even claim the body.

"A hero and a martyr, madame," the Prefect added, "to the cause of suffering humanity."

To-day, as a "hero and martyr," Mdme. Fleurnois continues to mourn her husband, and to view with pride the Medal of Honour sent her as his representative, which hung in her prim little drawing-room in the prim little New England village to which she speedily returned. She remembers nothing but the days of self-devotion and self-sacrifice that they spent together in plague-ridden Marseilles, and is happily still ignorant of the fact that she owes her own escape from death at the hero's hands to the simple accident of an insect in a cup of coffee.

M. ALDERSON.

THE £100 PRIZE

In "Pearson's Weekly" Football Competition has been won altogether three times this season. This competition is simplicity itself, and you should certainly go in for it.

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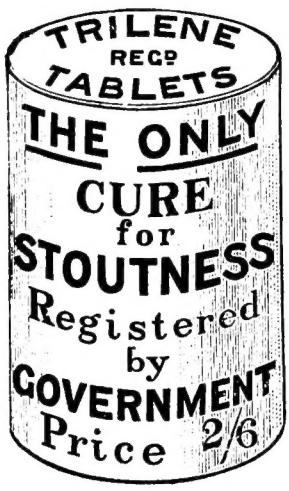
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

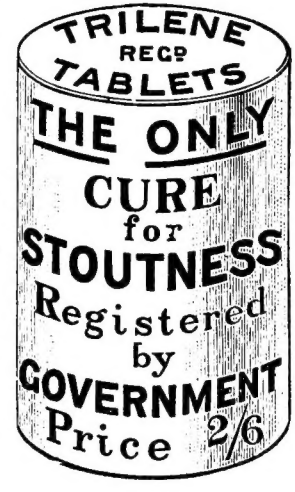
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

Miss S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

Mrs. F. HARPER, 61 Portland Crescent, Leeds, writes: "My doctor persuaded me to try a box, and I find they have done my breathing a lot of good and I can get about much better. My doctor did not wish his name mentioned, but they have done him good personally."

A. BROWN, of 25 Edwin Street, High Pallion, Sunderland, says: "You have no idea what a most wonderful effect the Tablets had. I am a great deal thinner, and better in health."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Rischolme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe diet, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if the had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity.

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Cleveland Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PART, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I think you on his account."

Mrs. JAMES SMITH, of Cowell Terrace, Soham, says: "Your 2s. 6d. box of Tablets reduced my weight 12lb."

Mrs. WOOS, 447 Cowbridge Road, Canton, Cardiff, says: "Tablets have a most marked effect, and I shall take every opportunity to make known the wonders of your remedy."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

"Miss HUMPHREYS, of Claremont Buildings, Shrewsbury, has lost 1st. in weight already, and thinks the Tablets do every success."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 39 inches. I hope soon to be 42. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 5lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Miss J. GUISE, 3 North End, Croydon, says: "I cannot speak too highly of the Tablets; I was stout up my life until a few weeks ago, when I first began your treatment. I was surprised to find they acted so admirably. I am now getting quite a slender figure, besides being better in health."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST.

I would particularly call the attention of every reader to the offer on page 654. If you have not already read the conditions under which the £50 is distributed, you ought certainly to do so at once. A sovereign is not to be sneezed at nowadays, especially when it may be obtained practically for the asking. The names of those people selected are taken not only from directories, but from the previous lists of prize-winners in *Short Stories*, and from many other sources in which your own name may possibly appear. "Of course," you will say, "it is not likely that I shall be chosen." Well, perhaps not. Still, on the other hand, it is quite possible that your name may be down to receive a sovereign, and if on looking through the list of people who would have received the money had they applied, you find your own cognomen in all the glory of type, you would have very good cause to envy you had taken your Editor's advice, and sent along a postcard.

G. J. T.—There are about 70,000 more words in the English language than in the French, German, Spanish, and Italian put together.

H. M. T. wants to know which is the most popular name for British fishing-boats.———"Mary." There are no fewer than a thousand vessels round our coasts bearing this name.

D. E. K.—Eating hair is certainly a disgusting habit, but one far more popular than you would suppose. Many girls bite off the ends of their hair and chew them in the same way as certain folk find solace in biting their finger-nails. Some time ago a British medical man found four pounds of hair in the stomach of a woman about thirty years old.

L. J.—I have never seen jackets of fish skins in this country, but they are widely used amongst the Esquimaux of Alaska. The Dolly Varden is the fish utilised, and the skin is prettily decorated with red spots.

M. G. H. would like to know when the "new woman" first made her appearance.———It would be difficult to say, for even Isaiah the prophet, who lived more than 2,500 years ago, complained that the women of his time overstepped the old rules and customs of their sex. In ancient Greece the question was constantly cropping up. Aristophanes, the comic poet, had many a hit at the women of his day, and in his "Ecclesiazusæ" he showed them on the stage, dressed as men, transacting the business of the state, and deciding on a community of goods—and of husbands.

P. S. B. has a dim recollection of hearing somewhere or the other about a regiment of soldiers being selected according to the shape of their noses. He would be glad if I can tell him if there is indeed such a regiment, and, if so, where.———Probably the one you are thinking of is a regiment of infantry of the guards in the Russian Army, founded by the Emperor Paul. That gentleman was the possessor of a typical Kalmuck nose of the most excruciatingly uptilted pattern, and, since then, out of compliment to him, all the officers and men of that particular regiment have noses of the same shape. The sight which they present when on parade is, as you may suppose, somewhat startling.

J. F. B.—You are right; many old glass bottles are ground up and used in the manufacture of mortar instead of sand. The reason is that it binds much better.

H. S.—Copper, brass, zinc, and silver are fatal enemies to microbes, so that if you want to abolish the festive microbe you have only to drop a piece of either of these metals on it. Pure gold, when cleaned and purified, will have no effect.

A. F.—No pictures are hung on the walls of the Louvre, in Paris, until the artist has been dead ten years.

F. M. G.—Yes, it is quite possible to plunge your bare hand into a basin of water without wetting it, by means of spreading a layer of lycopodium powder upon the surface of the water, which prevents all contact of the water with the hand.

Rechabite. — No, the temperance society you mention is not the oldest in the world. There is at least one that can boast of greater antiquity, and that is the abstaining commune of Achlyka, in Siberia, all of whose members are strict teetotalers every day in the year—except one.

L. D. H.—A general election in France differs from our election in many ways a great deal more than that it is fought on Sunday. For instance, all men when they have attained their majority are registered voters, whether they are householders or not. Everyone qualified is inscribed on a poll list, and is armed with an electoral card, giving his name, profession, and his passport of citizenship; this also serves for purposes of identity. Each card is numbered and corresponds with the number on the register. When a voter enters the polling station he gives up his electoral card, the number is compared with the number in the register, and when his identity is established he is allowed to vote. Before the card is returned to him an official tears off a corner of it, which renders it useless. This precaution renders fraudulent voting exceedingly difficult.

Swede writes in reference to the marriage customs of Sweden, dealt with in a recent number of *S.S.*, to say that the bride is seldom loaded with all kinds of ornaments, although she may wear occasionally a belt of silver, with articles suspended from it, and that the struggle between the married and unmarried guests has been abolished for some time.

Cissie.—Yes, there were men dressmakers before Worth. The first celebrity who made his mark in this particular line was Rhömberg, the son of a Bavarian peasant from the neighbourhood of Munich.

Moses writes: "Is there any period in the year during which no actual night occurs in England?"———Yes, from May 22nd to July 21st. Twilight lasts until the sun has disappeared eighteen degrees below the horizon, and during these sixty-one days this limit is never passed. There is, therefore, no actual night.

N. J.—German women do not go in for the "Women's Movement," and have very little sympathy with new ideas. In this they are unlike the men. There are twenty-six and a half million women in the Empire, and as the sexes are fairly equal in numbers, it is perhaps well for the men that they restrict their energies to the home circle.

N. M. W.—The navy of Persia consists of one dispatch vessel—the *Persepolis*—of 1,200 tons and ten knots speed. She is armed with five small breech-loading guns. Egypt has no efficient war-ships at all.

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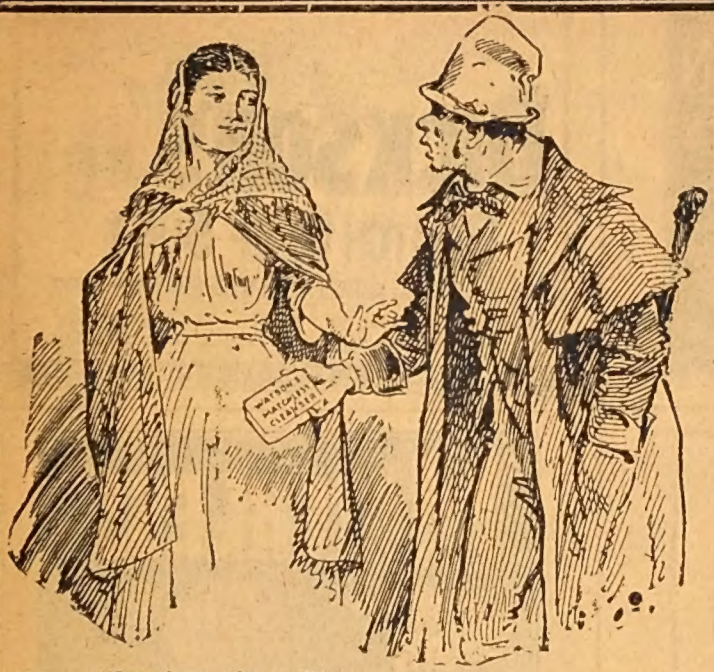

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PAT—"No, darlin', it's WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSORE I've brought ye."

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It does the work QUICKLY.
It does the work CHEAPLY.
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Lathers Freely in the Hardest Water,

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WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER
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The "Onrios" Book of Dream Interpretations is a handy publication, beautifully bound and illustrated, and will afford you a faultless definition of your future. It is an infallible adviser to your prosperity, and will surely lead you to undeniable fortune.

WHAT TO DO.—When you have found what you think are the missing letters, write the words out on a sheet of paper, numbering them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, as above, and send same to us, with a P.O. (not stamps) for 2s., and stamped addressed envelope for results, and we will forward to you, post free, a copy of the "Onrios" Dream Book. (Foreign orders 3s., payable in London.) We offer the above prizes to purchasers of our Book, in order to make this remarkable publication known to the public, and we are prepared to expend some thousands of pounds on this method of advertising our unique Dream Book.

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The **"ONRIOS" DREAM BOOK** (COPYRIGHT) is a book which will tell you the meaning of all your dreams, and may thus be the means of guiding you to the acquisition of **Fame and Fortune.** This book is a translation of old Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, etc., Oneirological manuscripts, parchments, and scrolls, which have come into our possession, some of them dating as far back as **379** B.C. It is a high-class publication, beautifully printed and bound, with **19 Engravings** of well-known pictures by some of the **Greatest Masters.** These pictures alone are worth more than the price we ask for the book. Everyone, whether they be in the highest or lowest station in life, should possess this **Marvellous Book.** Nothing like it has ever been published before.

DO NOT DELAY, but send AT ONCE for the **"ONRIOS" DREAM BOOK,** and grasp this opportunity to win one of these beautiful solid Silver Tea and Coffee Services, as a certain portion of the issue will be reserved for Foreign and Colonial orders. Write your name and full address very distinctly, and put the name of this paper on the top of your letter. Keep the number of your Postal Order in case it goes astray. This competition will close on December 30th, 1898. The solution of this Competition has been sealed and deposited with Messrs. Hibberd, Wall Street, London, N. Prizes will be awarded and results posted within the following week.

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LOUIS XI KING OF FRANCE 1461-1483.

"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH.

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